We Can (Not) Work It Out

A Curatorial Inquiry into the Danish Radio Archive

Sørensen, Trine Friis

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Trine Friis Sørensen

We Can (Not) Work It Out:

A Curatorial Inquiry into the Danish Radio Archive

Academic advisor: Frederik Tygstrup
Co-advisor: Sven Spieker

Institutnavn:	Institut for Kunst og Kulturvidenskab
Name of department:	Department of Arts and Cultural Studies
Author:	Trine Friis Sørensen
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Subject description:	This thesis inquires into the Danish Radio Archive through the commission of two artists, Kajsa Dahlberg and Olof Olsson, who I charge with producing artworks in relation to the archive. The artists' engagement with the DR Archive, their ensuing artworks as well as my curatorial practice are the pivotal components of this thesis' attempt to conduct research *through* curating and articulate ways of addressing the DR Archive.
Academic advisors:	Frederik Tygstrup and Sven Spieker
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Author's Note

The primary artworks analysed in this thesis are available for online viewing:

Kajsa Dahlberg: *Fifty Minutes in Half an Hour*, 2013 (video, 50 minutes, 16:9)
is available at http://vimeo.com/114759987 (password: Fiftyminutes)

Olof Olsson: *DR P3. 1963-2013. 50 Years of Danish State Authorised Pop Radio*, 2013
is available as video documentation at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r4AXdBJVwcg
The performance took place at Horsens Art Museum, January 19, 2013.

Another version of the opening part of Olsson's performance (from Sorø Art Museum, January 26, 2013) is available at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vKmA-m5Bwxk

Videos courtesy of the artists.

Introduction

Thou art a scholar; speak to it, Horatio.
Marcellus in Shakespeare's *Hamlet*[1]

There are things and occurrences that make us call upon the help of others. Situations that we feel we cannot handle ourselves or at least engage with single-handedly. Upon seeing the ghost of Hamlet's father, the officer Marcellus in Shakespeare's *Hamlet* summons Horatio, scholar and friend of Hamlet, to witness the appearance of this *thing,* and as it reappears Marcellus charges Horatio with speaking to the ghost. Marcellus has, in other words, seen this overwhelming and confounding thing before (twice, in fact), but he discerns that Horatio is better suited to engage with the ghost. This is the opening ghost scene of Act I of *Hamlet*, one that philosopher Jacques Derrida uses —along with the additional re-appearances of the ghost throughout the play—to develop his *hauntology* in his book *Specters of Marx*.[2] But while Derrida's politics of memory certainly plays a part in this thesis, my interest here is not merely the untimely presence of things past, but also the gesture, like that carried out by Marcellus, of delegating a task to someone else. He has happened upon something that is indeed too overwhelming and perplexing to deal with alone, and so he summons Horatio and charges him with engaging with the ghost.

This procedure of delegating a task to someone else is key to the practical operations that underpin this thesis—to be specific, the act of commissioning—and the reason for this act is exactly such an overwhelming thing of the past, in this case the Danish Radio Archive.[3]

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[1] William Shakespeare, "Hamlet, Prince of Denmark," in *The Works of William Shakespeare* (The Shakespeare Head Press, Odham Press Ltd and Basil Blackwell, 1947), 671.

[2] Hauntology, for Derrida, supplants and overturns its near-homonym, ontology. Instead of being and presence, hauntology evokes the figure of the ghost, which is neither present nor absent, neither dead nor alive. Other than being an ethical injunction and a politics of memory, the ghost also reminds us that our living present is not as self-sufficient as we might think, as Frederic Jameson has noted. Frederic Jameson, "Marx's Purloined Letter," in *Ghostly Demarcations: A Symposium on Jacques Derrida's Specters of Marx*, ed. Jacques Derrida and Michael Sprinker, Radical Thinkers 33 (London ; New York: Verso, 2008), 39, and Jacques Derrida, *Specters of Marx. The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning, and the New International* (New York, London: Routledge, 1994), 10.

[3] The Danish Radio Archive, or the DR Archive as I will refer to it in this thesis, is the radio archive of the National Broadcast Corporation in Denmark (or simply Denmark's Radio (DR) as I will refer to it henceforth.) For further information, see Jan Dohrmann, "About DR," DR.dk, accessed January 17, 2015, http://www.dr.dk/om_dr/about+dr.

We are, in other words, still in Denmark—albeit 40 km south of Elsinore, in Copenhagen, where the Danish Broadcasting Corporation has resided since 1925. The scene, however, is considerably less murderous than that of Shakespeare's *Hamlet.* Furthermore, there are, in fact, two instances of commissioning at work in this project—the first one I am subject to myself, the other one is my curatorial doing—but both of them concern the DR Archive. I will begin with the first instance of commissioning, which determines the basic set-up of this PhD project, and in a few pages I will get to the second round of commissioning, which determines my approach to the DR Archive.

The DR Archive is the subject matter of the research project LARM[4] of which I am part, and practice is stipulated as a mode of address in the call for research proposals that, following an application, I was selected to produce a response to. To this end, my PhD adheres to the notion of a commission—I am charged with producing a particular kind of work, that is, to engage with the DR Archive by way of my practice as a curator and in turn produce a piece of research, a thesis. Now, the (re-)appearance of the ghost of Hamlet's father, which prompts Marcellus to urge Horatio to speak to it, does not happen on a whim. A dire urgency has called forth the ghost, and we may similarly ask about the urgency of the DR Archive. Because if the commission, as I will argue in more detail later on, does indeed respond to a need, to an incompleteness, to a certain potentiality that lends itself to new or renewed work, one might ask, why the archive now, and why practice? What is the immediate urgency, the gravity, the potential of these things that call for research and scrutiny in the first place?

A Different Archival Approach

Part of the answer to that question is that the DR Archive is in a process of digitalisation, one that is ongoing and, in all likelihood, will continue for years to come. While digitalisation is primarily a means to preserve the radiophonic documents, it also enables unprecedented access to the Danish radiophonic cultural heritage. Rather than being confined to the physical archive and the interface of analogue playback technologies, digitalisation of the audio files renders them potentially accessible from anywhere and at any time. LARM is exploiting this potential by producing an online platform, LARM.fm, which provides online streaming of the

[4] LARM is an interdisciplinary research project involving a number Danish research and cultural institutions. For further information, see LARM, "About LARM," LARM Audio Research Archive, accessed January 2, 2015, http://larm.blogs.ku.dk/about-larm/.

digitalised files, available in the first instance to researchers and students.[5] In addition to this technological component, LARM also includes a number of humanistic research projects that—apart from producing exemplary case studies into the radiophonic cultural heritage—also contribute by formulating requirements for the infrastructure, or to use LARM's turn of phrase, LARM.fm is conditioned by "user driven innovation."[6] Digitalisation, in other words, is the exigency that has prompted the LARM research project and its commissioning of numerous PhDs and Post Docs, including my own.

It is safe to say that the archive was not non-urgent or indeed unproblematic before the emergence of digital media, but digitalisation would seem to establish a new archival potentiality, a new need. It demands scrutiny and examination as to the meaning and gravity of the archive; does the digital add something radically different to our understanding of the archive? If we turn to cultural critic Andreas Huyssen the answer is certainly affirmative; the past has, he argues, "become part of the present in ways simply unimaginable in earlier centuries"[7] due to modern reproduction media and the internet. In a certain sense the LARM project itself also constitutes a resounding 'yes' to this question, because the project hinges on an unparalleled (albeit still restricted and at times problematic) access to the DR Archive, both analogue and digital. What is different, even before the infrastructure is put in place and the research conducted, is that the LARM project can take place at all.

It could, on the other hand, be argued that there is nothing new in undertaking archival research; in fact, the archive is, along with the library, one of the most ordinary places to conduct research within the humanities. Of course, digitalisation has made the archive infinitely more accessible and convenient; rather than spending hours in the physical archive trying to locate the sought-after file, the digital infrastructure delivers the desired document instantaneously. But are we in reality simply doing what we always have done? Are the questions we are asking and the answers we are seeking in the digital archive really different, or do we just get to where we want to go more quickly? The other charge of the commission—to address the archive through practice—seems to indicate that LARM is also looking for approaches to the archive that differ from prevalent academic modes of inquiry. Not that scholarly practice has become redundant—there is a range of crucial questions, methods, and theories at work in academia—but perhaps the proliferation of scholarly

[5] LARM depends on a copyright agreement with DR and the State and University Library (Statsbiblioteket) that allow students and researchers to access digitalised audio files via LARM.fm.
[6] LARM, "About LARM," http://larm.blogs.ku.dk/about-larm/.
[7] Andreas Huyssen, *Present Pasts: Urban Palimpsests and the Politics of Memory*, Cultural Memory in the Present (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2003), 1.

research has washed out its contours and rendered it conventional and hence indiscernible. Or, as anthropologist Arjun Appadurai has phrased it, research "is so much part of the ground on which we stand and the air we breathe that it resists conscious scrutiny. (...) *Research* is virtually synonymous with our sense of what it means to be scholars and members of the academy, and thus it has the invisibility of the obvious."[8]

As a privileged stomping ground for knowledge production, the archive is, perhaps, a particularly difficult place to relinquish this invisibility, but that does not mean that we should not try. The point here, of course, is not to abandon established research practices just for the sake of it. But if the archive indeed is such a fertile ground for a certain kind of knowledge production, perhaps it has even more in store for us if we stray off the familiar paths, which steadily take us where we want to go, and instead scour for alternative routes and different archival practices,[9] not only to meet the archive differently and discernibly, but also to differentiate, make visible and perhaps even influence the workings of scholarly practice. As cultural critic and theorist Mieke Bal has paraphrased Appadurai's examination of research, the latter advances "the need to develop a dialogic sensibility that makes it possible to learn mutually from contact with different modes of doing research."[10]

Practice has, in recent decades, been seeping into academia's traditionally theory-based knowledge production, testifying to a tentative rehashing of academia's epistemological tradition. There is of course nothing new in deriving knowledge from practice. Practical knowledge informs an infinite number of activities and procedures in society, but historically the embodied, practical, situation-specific knowledge of the craftsman has been segregated

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[8] Arjun Appadurai, "Grassroots Globalization and the Research Imagination," in *Globalization*, ed. Arjun Appadurai (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2001), 10.

[9] While the archive, from an academic perspective, is most often considered a source of research where researchers look for specific traces of the past in order to confirm or contest a prevailing perception of a given subject—or perhaps to propose an entirely new one—there are of course many other ways to engage with the archive, both within and beyond academia. Approaching the DR Archive through the act of commissioning, which is what I do here, differs from such traditional approaches by not only introducing artistic and curatorial practices into the mix, but also by emphasising the significance of how the archive is approached, engaged with and put to work through these practices. Another national broadcast corporation, the BBC, announced last year that it had chosen six Scottish moving image artists, who will be given access to the BBC archives in order to produce artworks. While this initiative bears some resemblance to what I am doing here, it is, to my knowledge, not framed as a curatorial research project. See BBC, "BBC Arts Selects Six Scottish Artists to Delve into BBC Archives - Media Centre," BBC, February 14, 2014, http://www.bbc.co.uk/mediacentre/latestnews/2014/artists-and-archive.

[10] Mieke Bal, "Research Practice: New Words on Cold Cases," in *What Is Research in the Visual Arts?: Obsession, Archive, Encounter*, ed. Michael Ann Holly and Marquard Smith, Clark Studies in the Visual Arts (Williamstown, Mass. : New Haven: Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute ; Distributed by Yale University Press, 2008), 209.

from the theoretical, context-independent knowledge of the scientist.[11] However, the advancement of practice-as-research begins to negotiate the divide between embodied and conceptual knowledge, suggesting that knowledge originating in or through practice may be put to work beyond its particular context. The intention here, I would argue, is not necessarily to seek generalisable applications for the knowledge generated through practice—to generate theory from practice, so to speak—but to work the intensities and pursue the potentialities of these encounters, as Appadurai has suggested. This is what this thesis aspires to do.

So, while the commission to which I respond is initially prompted by the digitalisation of the DR Archive, the other stipulation of the commission—to approach the archive by way of my practice as a curator—indicates an additional potentiality: that the archive may have more in store for us if we approach it through another mode of address; that we might be able to actualise the archive's potential for knowledge production differently. We have, to be sure, been asking questions and searching for answers in the archive before, and we may continue to do so in the digital archive, conditioned of course by the new digital structure of the archive.[12] But addressing the archive through practice might enable us to ask these questions differently or, perhaps even, to ask entirely different questions. Of course, we cannot designate these questions beforehand. They can only emerge through practice; through the operations that I perform in relation to the archive.

Caring for an Archive

Now, it seems pertinent to ask how a curatorial practice can produce such a different mode of inquiry. Most curators today have a background in academia, for example art history, cultural studies or curatorial MA programmes—the latter in particular has become exceedingly common for anyone wishing to pursue curating as a profession. The last decades' remarkable increase in these programmes testifies to a profession that has left behind the original role of the behind-the-scenes curator-as-carer[13] and that has increasingly, since the 1990s,[14] gained

[11] See Mikkel Bogh and Frederik Tygstrup, "Working the Interface: New Encounters between Art and Academia," in *Investigação Em Arte E Design: Fendas No Método E Na Criação = Research in Art and Design: Cracks in Method and Creation*, ed. José Quaresma, Fernando Paulo Rosa Dias, and Juan Carlos Ramos Guadix (Lisboa: Edição CIEBA, 2010), 103.

[12] As we know from Derrida, "archivable meaning is also and in advance codetermined by the structure that archives." Which is to say that our questioning and searching in the digital archive necessarily differ from our comparable efforts in the analogue archive. Jacques Derrida, *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression*, (Chicago [Ill.]: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 18.

[13] Paul O'Neill, *The Culture Of Curating And The Curating Of Culture(s)* (Cambridge, Massachusetts ; London, England: The MIT Press, 2012), 9.

immense prominence, today occupying a position of agency, authority, and authorship within contemporary programming and exhibition making. The curator has become "an independently motivated practitioner with a more centralized position within the contemporary art world and its parallel commentaries,"[15] according to curator and writer Paul O'Neill; in fact, compared to the traditional museum curator it is only the work of displaying art to the public[16] that remains in the practice of the most distinct specimen of the new curator of recent decades, the independent curator.[17] Specifically, the curator can be described as someone who produces connections[18]—curating is, according to art historian Beatrice von Bismarck, a constellational activity that combines "things that haven't been connected before—artworks, artefacts, information, people, sites, contexts, resources, etc."[19]

This definition, however, only address *what* the curator does, and not *how* she does it, so we might ask what sort of drive or sentiment precipitates this curatorial mode of operation? To come up with an answer to this question, I would like to return to the notion of care, which the term 'curator' both historical and etymological adheres to,[20] but one that has declined on account of the transformation of the role of the curator. But maybe we shouldn't discard the original attributes of the curator too hastily.[21] To care for something or someone

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[14] Beatrice von Bismarck, "Curatorial Criticality – On the Role of Freelance Curators in the Field of Contemporary Art," *Oncurating.org*, no. 9 (2011): 19.
[15] O'Neill, *The Culture Of Curating And The Curating Of Culture(s)*, 2.
[16] Nathalie Heinich and Michael Pollak list four crucial tasks that can be said to define the traditional (museum) curator: safeguarding the heritage, enriching collections (through acquisitions of contemporary works), research and display. Ironically, the public presentation of art "traditionally occupied the lowest level in the hierarchy of functions." The four tasks listed by Heinich and Pollak, however, remain crucial to many museum curators today. Nathalie Heinich and Michael Pollak, "From Museum Curator to Exhibition Auteur," in Thinking about Exhibitions, ed. Reesa Greenberg, Bruce W. Ferguson, and Sandy Nairne (London ; New York: Routledge, 1996), 235.
[17] Cf. the prominence of the independent curator see for example Bismarck, "Curatorial Criticality," 19–23, and Jens Hoffmann, "A Certain Tendency of Curating," in *Curating Subjects*, ed. Paul O'Neill (Amsterdam: De Appel, 2007), 137–142.
[18] Bismarck, "Curatorial Criticality," 19.
[19] Irit Rogoff and Beatrice von Bismarck, "Curating/Curatorial," in *Cultures of the Curatorial*, ed. Jörn Schafaff, Thomas Weski, and Beatrice von Bismarck (Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2012), 24. Curator and critic Maria Lind also emphasises connections as key to curating: "Today I imagine curating as a way of thinking in terms of interconnections: linking objects, images, processes, people, locations, histories, and discourses in physical space like an active catalyst, generating twists, turns, and tensions." Maria Lind, "The Curatorial," in *Selected Maria Lind Writing*, ed. Brian Kuan Wood (Berlin; New York: Sternberg Press, 2010), 63. While there certainly are other ways to describe curating, I find Bismarck's and Lind's thinking about connections to be both productive and concise.
[20] A curator is, according to *OED*, someone "who has the care or charge of a thing or person." *OED Online,* s.v. "curator, n." accessed June 2014. Oxford University Press. http://www.oed.com. Furthermore, the Latin *cura* means care, solicitude, carefulness, thought, concern. *A Latin Dictionary,* s.v. "cura, n." accessed June 2014. (Oxford. Clarendon Press. 1879), http://www.perseus.tufts.edu.
[21] In an interview, curator Charles Esche suggests that in principle we ought to find a different name for curator, because both within and beyond art (in law, for example) a curator is someone who takes care of someone or something, or even has the responsibility of someone else. That is, an art curator cares for a collection, and a curator (in a legal sense) is someone, who takes care of a minor (at least in Scotland). These denotations are,

need not entail a tedious custodial type of caring; in fact, to care may just be the driving force behind our efforts as curators or academics. Could it not, as art critic Jan Verwoert has proposed,[22] be the reason why we insist on doing something in particular and scrupulous ways or why we initiate or become involved in poorly funded projects—because we care? We may even rejuvenate the activity of caring by evoking its now obsolete etymological association with curiosity following the lead of philosopher Michel Foucault, who has recast the notion of curiosity through its connection to concern and care:

> Curiosity is a vice that has been stigmatised in turn by Christianity, by philosophy, and even by a certain conception of science. Curiosity, futility. The word, however, pleases me. To me it suggests something altogether different: it evokes "concern"; it evokes the care one takes for what exists and could exist; a readiness to find strange and singular what surrounds us; a certain relentlessness to break up the familiarities and to regard otherwise the same things, a fervour to grasp what is happening and what passes; a casualness in regard to the traditional hierarchies of the important and the essential.[23]

It is of course no small task to aspire to Foucault's suggestions on this matter, but he has brought up the association between caring and curiosity, whether obsolete or not, and elaborated upon its modes, sentiments and potentialities. And they are very far from the maintenance of status quo that the curator-as-carer exercised; in fact, they are quite the opposite. Foucault enables us to reconceptualise the curator-as-carer as someone who cares and cares to operate differently; as someone who may indeed address the archive in a different manner.

Another Round of Commissioning

At the core of this project is yet another commission: I approach the DR Archive by commissioning Swedish artist Kajsa Dahlberg and Danish-Swedish-Dutch artist Olof Olsson to engage with this archive and produce artworks in relation to it. This task—just like the one that has been assigned to me by the LARM project—is a doable one. It will, needless to say, be challenging and require great effort, but it is something that we *can* work out and finalise in the form of an exhibition, for example, or a thesis. By commissioning Dahlberg and Olsson, I am, however, also delegating the task of addressing the urgency of the DR Archive—of responding to a need for a certain kind work to be done—and this task is a

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according to Esche, entirely different from the contemporary meaning of a curator as an exhibition maker, an *Ausstellungsmacher*. Charles Esche, "Beti Zerovc Interviews Charles Esche," in *Modest Proposals*, ed. Serkan Ozkaya (Istanbul: Baglam Publishing, 2005), 57.

[22] Jan Verwoert, "Personal Support: How to Care?," in *Support Structures*, ed. Céline Condorelli (Berlin; New York: Sternberg Press, 2009), 165.

[23] Michel Foucault, "The Masked Philosopher," in *Foucault Live: (Interviews, 1961-1984)*, ed. Sylvère Lotringer, trans. Lysa Hochroth and John Johnston (New York, N.Y.: Semiotext(e), 1996), 305.

whole lot more difficult to be done with. It is, as I will argue in this thesis, something that we *cannot* work out. These two modes of operation pervade the inquiries of this project at large.

If we briefly, in light of this second round of commissioning, return to the initial layout of this project—the DR Archive and my curatorial practice—an additional component has been added to the mix. The archive is no longer merely my problem but also the artists'. Commissioning Dahlberg and Olsson does, however, not get me off the hook: I remain implicated.[24] The process that my commissioning brings into being is not one that I can withdraw from, in fact, the commissions forge relations not only between the artists and myself, but also—by way of the artists—between the archive and myself. That is to say, what I do as a curator and how I do it has a critical influence on the entire process, not least how the trouble with the archive plays out. On the other hand, commissioning the artists also entail that they come to condition my relation to the DR Archive. They step in-between the DR Archive and me, and in doing so they provide me with new entry points to the archive; both their processes as well as their ensuing artworks generate new archival perspectives. Their approaches, manoeuvres and choices designate certain aspects, structures, and temporalities; they seek out certain matters that concern them and go about this work in particular ways.

I was, of course, not entirely in the dark about the partialities and inclinations of the artists' practices, and hence what paths they might pursue in relation to the archive and what sort of work they might produce. My choice to work with Dahlberg and Olsson was based on thorough research into their previous work as well as conversations with them. Dahlberg (born 1973 in Gothenburg, Sweden) has, in her previous works, negotiated issues of representation, marginalisation, and agency—on several occasions devising archival systems to organise significant amounts of material, specifically in the works *A Room of One's Own / A Thousand Libraries* (2006) and *No unease can be noticed, all are happy and friendly* (2010).[25] She works with video, text and sound. Olsson (born 1965 in Helsingborg, Sweden) primarily works with spoken performances, taking his cue from storytelling, comedy, and lectures. Often operating through analogies, his topical range is considerable—popular culture, politics, history, language, music, and art to name but a few—and he almost always includes autobiographical anecdotes in his performances. One might say that Dahlberg and Olsson's practices motivated the commissions; that they were already concerned with

[24] This circumstance distinguishes my commissioning of Dahlberg and Olsson from Marcellus' charging of Horatio to speak to the ghost in Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, which is quoted at the beginning of this thesis.
[25] Both works will be analysed as part of Chapter 2.

archival matters in their work—Dahlberg by using archival structures to articulate and empower marginalised positions[26] and Olsson by way of his idiosyncratic take on storytelling[27] as well as his passion for radio.[28] That said, I had never worked with neither Dahlberg nor Olsson before, so any pre-conceptions I had were, needless to say, conjectural.

How We Work Today

Turning to artists in order to come to terms with an archive is not an altogether unexpected move. The archive has been a dominant trend in contemporary art for at least a decade,[29] and one that has been explored and described in numerous exhibitions and publications over the years—much too comprehensively to rehearse here in full. A key moment is of course Hal Foster's 2004 essay in which he famously observes an "archival impulse" among some contemporary artists who "seek to make information, often lost or displaced, physically present,"[30] motivated by a will "to connect what cannot be connected" with the intention of establishing alternative knowledge.[31] Foster's observation was to some extent echoed a couple of years later by another art historian, Mark Godfrey, who, in his essay "The Artist as Historian" identified an "increasing number of artists whose practice starts with research in archives, and others who deploy what has been termed an archival form of research."[32] In recent years, curators such as Okwui Enwezor,[33] Massimiliano Gioni[34] and Dieter

[26] This is particularly the case with the work *A Room of One's Own / A Thousand Libraries*—a compilation of marginal notes and underlinings made by readers of Virginia Wolff's essay *A Room of One's Own.*
[27] Dieter Roelstraete, who I elaborate on shortly, lists storytelling as an indication of an archival tendency, "oral culture being the oldest form of memory retrieval." Dieter Roelstraete, "Field Notes," in *The Way of the Shovel: On the Archaeological Imaginary in Art* (Chicago: Museum of Contemporary Art in association with The University of Chicago Press, 2013), 23.
[28] During our first conversation in April 2012, I learned that Olsson comes from a family of passionate radio listeners.
[29] So Dieter Roelstraete argues. (Roelstraete, "Field Notes", 17.) One can, however, trace this tendency further back. For example, art historians Hal Foster and Sven Spieker argue, in different ways, that the propensity towards the archive can be traced back to the beginning of the 20th century. See Hal Foster, "An Archival Impulse," *October* 1, no. 110 (2004): 3, and Sven Spieker, *The Big Archive: Art from Bureaucracy* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2008), 15.
[30] Foster, "An Archival Impulse," 4.
[31] Ibid., 21.
[32] Mark Godfrey, "The Artist as Historian," *October*, no. 120 (2007): 142-143.
[33] Enwezor curated the exhibition *Archive Fever: Uses of the Document in Contemporary Art* at the International Center of Photography in New York in 2008, which focused on the mediums of photography and film. In the accompanying essay, Enwezor argues that "the camera is literally an archiving machine, every photograph, every film is *apriori* an archival object." Okwui Enwezor, *Archive Fever: Uses of the Document in Contemporary Art* (New York, N.Y.; Göttingen: International Center of Photography ; Steidl Publishers, 2008), 12.
[34] Gioni curated, among other things, the 55th instalment of the Venice Biennale entitled *The Encyclopedic Palace* in 2013 that takes its title from a an imaginary museum meant to house all worldly knowledge, dreamt up and patented by artist Marino Auriti in 1955. Although never realised, the desire to capture an image of the world in all its variety and richness is one that Auriti shares with many artists, writers etc.. Gioni states: "Today,

Roelstraete[35] have also been instrumental in fuelling the discussion about the archive within contemporary art.[36]

But what really makes this archival tendency too comprehensive to rehearse here is not merely its extensiveness as a tendency but also its prevalence as a mode of operation. As Roelstraete points out in the essay "Field Notes," art is now increasingly "being produced on laptops, in libraries, and of course above all in *archives*—sites for preservation and dissemination of knowledge;" places that today, by way of digital media, indeed make the past available to us in unprecedented ways, as Huyssen would have it. It is becoming, I would argue, ever more difficult to outline the limits of archival art, because digital media and the internet have proliferated and normalised the practices of searching for, selecting and compiling information. Can we today speak of art practices that do not employ some kind of archival practice, of artists who in their work do not reference some kind of archive, be it historical-at-large or art historical?[37] In her introduction to the anthology *Lost in the Archives,* editor and professor of philosophy Rebecca Comay asks: "What isn't an archive these days?"[38] We might also ask: Who isn't an archivist these days?

Now, if the purpose here was to tap into the proclivity towards the archive in contemporary art, it would appear to be almost redundant to commission artists to engage with the DR Archive, since Dahlberg and Olsson's work already—and almost inevitably—is caught up in archival practices. But the matter of concern here is not merely a certain archival tendency among contemporary artists but rather to come to terms with the DR Archive, with a chunk of cultural heritage that demands renewed scrutiny, and for this purpose artists seem to be proficient agents. What is pivotal here is not only that Dahlberg and Olsson are part of a long line of artists working with archives, but, even more importantly, that this tendency

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as we grapple with a constant flood of information, such attempts seem even more necessary and even more desperate." Massimiliano Gioni, "The Encyclopedic Palace," *La Biennale Di Venezia*, 2013, http://www.labiennale.org/en/art/archive/55th-exhibition/55iae/.

[35] In 2009, Roelstraete—turning to the metaphor of digging by way of Walter Benjamin—begins to develop his understanding of the artist as a historiographer in the essay "The Way of the Shovel: On the Archeological Imaginary in Art," published in *E-Flux Journal*, no. 4 (March 2009). This notion is further unfolded in the 2013-exhibition *The Way of the Shovel: Art as Archeology* at Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago and the accompanying catalogue text, "Field Notes." Roelstraete prefers the notion of *historiographer* rather than Godfrey's *historian* owing to the centrality of writing or narrating in the art practices he addresses. Roelstraete, "Field Notes," 20, n. 9.

[36] These curators are just a couple of more recent examples, but as I merely wish to address this tendency in passing, I choose to mention only a couple of seminal texts and exhibitions that testify to an archival propensity in contemporary art.

[37] Roelstraete makes a distinction between the art-historical reference of the work of predecessors and the preoccupation with history in general, stating that the former is as old as art itself whereas the latter has reached a critical level today. Roelstraete, "Field Notes," 19.

[38] Rebecca Comay, "Introduction," in *Lost in the Archives*, ed. Rebecca Comay, (Toronto, ON: Alphabet City Media, 2002), 12.

enables me to rely on them when it comes to engaging with the DR Archive. I want to stress that I am not trying to diminish the significance of archival art—on the contrary, it is precisely the archival tendency in contemporary art that allows me to propose this research design. The impulse to work with the archive is, of course, not the artists' own but is occasioned by my commission: Neither a compulsion to seek out lost or displaced radiophonic documents nor an urge to "slow down the spiral of forgetfulness"[39]—as Roelstraete describes art's role—was the catalyst for their engagement with the DR Archive in the first place; I was. With this course of action, I am not only relying on an archival tendency in contemporary art but also on an archival mode of operation that has pervaded how we work today, and indeed how artists work.

Two Lines of Inquiry

What emerge from these initial manoeuvres, then, are two main lines of inquiry that are both interrelated and entangled. One is concerned with how Dahlberg and Olsson engage with the DR Archive, how they set out to realise the commissions, and how their ensuing artworks go about addressing the archive. My inquiry focuses on how their initial manoeuvres and ensuing artworks offer insights into the workings of the archive, and how the archive as an epistemic structure can sound out possible meanings of the artists' work. In other words, at issue here is a certain negotiation between the artworks and the DR Archive as to how meaning may or may not settle within this exchange. The artworks in question are Olsson's performance *DR P3. 1963-2013. 50 Years of Danish State Authorised Pop Radio*, which he performed nine times during his tour of Danish (and one Swedish) art and cultural institutions in January 2013, and Dahlberg's video work "Fifty Minutes in Half an Hour", which was shown as part of her solo exhibition, *This Time It's Political,* at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Roskilde, Denmark, opening February 1, 2013.

The other main line of inquiry is concerned with my curatorial practice, in particular the act of commissioning that not only establishes the practical configuration of this project but also constitutes my mode of inquiry into the DR Archive. Hence, this second line of inquiry prompts a pondering of the workings of the commission in order to explicate its methodological implications. The task at hand is, in other words, to flesh out the configuration of DR Archive, curator, artists, and the ensuing artworks that the commission establishes, and to develop the role of the curator. These efforts pivot on what in recent years

[39] Roelstraete, “Field Notes,” 33.

has emerged as a thinking about *the curatorial*[40] as something separate from the activity of curating. Where curating can be said to deliver a promise (of an exhibition, for example) and utilises a number of skills and practices to achieve this goal, the curatorial opens up a space of theoretical reflection and speculation that upsets the process of fulfilling this promise.[41] Jean-Paul Martinon and Irit Rogoff, founders of the PhD research programme *Curatorial / Knowledge,*[42] argue that the curatorial "explores all that takes place on the stage set-up, both intentionally and unintentionally, by the curator and views it as an event of knowledge." This is more or less exactly what I intend to do here—specifically with regard to the commission. It is not merely a matter of what I do and how I do it, but also what it means, what is stimulated and what is constrained, and what sort of thinking is made possible. Designating the commission as my mode of inquiry into the DR Archive exactly requires a thinking *through* the activity of curating[43]—both in the sense of carefully examining my operations as well as developing them as vehicles for thinking.

This propensity towards the curatorial is not a covert denunciation of curating—my practice as a curator is after all the impetus and driving force behind this project. But faced, as I am, with an archive, the finality of curating seems to suggest that we can indeed be done with the archive, with the past, and this prospect is, if we look to Derrida, not only frightening but also an impossibility.[44] The curatorial, on the other hand, is an ongoing activity that does not seek cessation but has acknowledged that the exhibition or any other momentary coming together of knowledges merely is a stopover in a process, as Rogoff has put it,[45] or, if we stay with Derrida: meaning is always deferred. The notion of the curatorial, in other words, would appear to be a crucial perspective when addressing an archive through curating.

What I propose to do in this thesis ultimately pertains to how the commission as an experimental research set-up enables me to articulate different ways of inquiring into the DR

[40] I use *curatorial* as an adjective on several occasions throughout this thesis to address, for example, my own curatorial practice—that is, my practice of curating. Only with the definite article, *the* curatorial, does the thinking described here apply.
[41] Jean-Paul Martinon and Irit Rogoff, "Preface," in *The Curatorial: A Philosophy of Curating*, ed. Jean-Paul Martinon (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2013), ix.
[42] *Curatorial / Knowledge* was initiated in 2006 at Goldsmiths College in London and has contributed significantly to developing the thinking about *the curatorial*. A publication, *The Curatorial: A Philosophy of Curating*, edited by Jean-Paul Martinon, was published in 2013, compiling a vast range of proposals as to what *the curatorial* might entail, but others, for example Beatrice von Bismarck and Maria Lind, have also proposed understandings of the notion of the curatorial in recent years. See Lind, "The Curatorial," 63–66, and Rogoff and Bismarck, "Curating/Curatorial," 21–38.
[43] Jean-Paul Martinon, ed., *The Curatorial: A Philosophy of Curating* (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2013), back cover.
[44] Derrida, *Specters of Marx*, 120–121.
[45] Rogoff and Bismarck, "Curating/Curatorial," 27.

Archive. Rather than searching for answers to questions already determined, the artists and I conduct the inquiries and develop the questioning through our practices and approaches to the DR Archive. By commissioning Dahlberg and Olsson, I not only delegate the task of engaging with the DR Archive, I also designate my own mode of inquiry into the archive. One that indeed encourages the dialogic sensibility between different practices and modes of doing research that Bal speaks about—not only with regard to our artistic and curatorial practices but also by including a number of theoretical perspectives into the mix.

Questionability

I have already mentioned Derrida a couple of times, so let me expand a little on my use of theory, because while the workings of practice, both my own and that of the artists, constitute the nucleus of this project, I lean upon theory to open up its possible meanings. The purpose is not to discipline practice or instrumentalise the artworks, but rather to develop and complicate the issues that arise from these endeavours. My references to Derrida are not random: he is a recurrent interlocutor throughout the dissertation because both the DR Archive and the artists' works lend themselves to conversations and speculations in the company of his politics of memory. That said, Derrida is not the only theoretical voice in this dissertation; Walter Benjamin and Giorgio Agamben in particular have also enabled me to develop the inquiries of Dahlberg and Olsson's artworks, and aspects of Bruno Latour's thinking have proved useful in relation to conceptualising the act of commissioning. I have no doubt that there is a number of other theoretical positions that could have contributed to opening up both the artistic and the curatorial work in interesting and critical ways, but these are the ones that I have found to resonate most intriguingly with the practices at work.

As the following chapters will demonstrate, my mode of operation is not one of digging to uncover knowledge hidden in the artworks and practices, but rather one that develops and actualises the problems that these manifestations and practices propose. Furthermore, although the nexus of this project is an archive, the project is, as a general rule, less concerned with the past as it was, and is considerably more interested in what can become of it; what it has to offer prospectively. Dahlberg and Olsson's artworks do not linger nostalgically with moments past; they engage, in different ways and through different temporalities, with such moments within the context and urgency of the present.[46]

[46] Like Huyssen has argued, "the act of remembering is always in and of the present, while its referent is of the past and thus in the past." Huyssen, *Present Pasts*, 3–4.

Furthermore, the project as a whole is not an art-historical project. By making such a blunt statement I am not trying denigrate art-history but rather to make it clear that the purpose here is not art-historical in its nature. The project is, of course, conditioned by art-history to some degree; my decision to approach the archive by commissioning artists is underpinned by the archival propensity in contemporary art, already congealed into art-history. But I am not an art-historian. I am not looking to lay out an intricate historical tapestry of the different fields of knowledge that come together in this project; I merely rely on art-history to point me to a number of positions and tendencies that underpin the lines of inquiry that I wish to pursue.

What ultimately defines this project is practice; the project operates through practice and takes off from it. The artistic practices open up trajectories into or around the archive, and my own curatorial practice not only initiates the project but also comes to constitute a crucial component in its knowledge production. Within the field of practice research a distinction is often made between practice-based and practice-led research.[47] The major difference between the two, as I understand it, is the significance ascribed to the artefacts or creative outcomes of the practice such as images, performances, or exhibitions in practice-based research.[48] Here, the creative outcome constitutes an indispensable part of the research and is presented alongside the written component.[49] Practice-led research, on the other hand, "is concerned with the nature of practice and leads to new knowledge that has operational significance for that practice. The primary focus of the research is to advance knowledge about practice, or to advance knowledge within practice."[50] In other words, practice-led research does not depend on the intensity and singularity of a creative outcome as such; rather, it is informed by practice, it aspires to extract knowledge from practice, and to advance this knowledge within or beyond practice.

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[47] Creativity & Cognition Studios, "Differences between Practice-Based and Practice-Led Research," accessed June 13, 2014, http://www.creativityandcognition.com/research /practice-based-research/differences-between-practice-based-and-practice-led-research/. There is, admittedly, quite a lot of variation when it comes to defining these modes of practice research, but like Andrea Philips, Director of Doctoral Research at the Art Department at Goldsmiths, I find these definitions put forward by the Creativity and Cognition Studios of the University of Technology Sydney both useful and affirmative. Philips, however, relies only on the definition of practice-based research and not practice-led research. Andrea Philips, "Why Practice-Based PhDs Are Political," in *Investigação Em Arte E Design: Fendas No Método E Na Criação = Research in Art and Design: Cracks in Method and Creation*, ed. José Quaresma, Fernando Paulo Rosa Dias, and Juan Carlos Ramos Guadix (Lisboa: Edição CIEBA, 2010), 70, n. 3.

[48] Creativity & Cognition Studios, "Differences between Practice-Based and Practice-Led Research".

[49] There are many different variations when it comes to how to present practice-based research, for example, some practice-based research programmes curtail the written component and focus more attention on the potentialities of the creative outcome as research in itself.

[50] Ibid.

I have to admit that I find myself in a pickle when trying to decide which of these two kinds of practice research resonate most affirmatively with this project. Of course, I could go with practice-based research by pointing to Dahlberg's exhibition and Olsson's performance tour as creative outcomes of my own curatorial practice, but these realisations were truly collaborative efforts between the artists and myself; we worked together to establish the final layout of Dahlberg's exhibition and Olsson's performance tour. In addition, these manifestations do not capture the scope of my curatorial work; its significance is not crystallised in these instances of display, but largely harboured in the curatorial operations that institute the project as such—that is, the act of commissioning. Turning away from the creative outcomes and focusing instead on the significance of practice shifts the mode of research from practice-based to practice-led, from the finality and significance of a creative outcome to the potentiality of practice at work. The mode of practice-led research would, in other words, seem to accommodate the kind of thinking and questioning that the notion of the curatorial encourages.

However, if we consider the artists' practices, I am very reluctant to dismiss the significance of their work as such within the context of this project, and that would indeed be the case if I were to frame this project as practice-led. I do not delude myself into believing that my analyses can exhaust the possible meanings warranted by the artworks, or that any or all readings can capture and convey the intensity of the artworks. The processes that the commission brings into being may be defined by finitude, but the works that bring these processes to a close are not as easily resolved. The artworks work and will continue to do so; they will lend themselves to other readings and produce meanings that differ from those I am able to propose here. I will therefore refrain from designating my mode of research as either practice-based or practice-led because such a distinction would lock the project into an unfortunate either/or. While this project ultimately gravitates towards the potentialities of practice rather than creative outcomes, I would like to also acknowledge the artworks' future production of meaning, a production that will indeed contribute to transforming and re-inscribing our understanding of the archive. I realise that readers of this dissertation can only experience Dahlberg and Olsson's works through the photographic documentation provided in this thesis and the online video documentation, but these works are essential in themselves and pivotal in obtaining a full understanding of this project. This dissertation sets out to develop a questioning into the DR Archive through curatorial and artistic practices; the artworks ensure that this work does not harden into answers.

Inquisitive Get-togethers

Wrapping up this introduction, I would like to bring together some points from the previous pages, viz., the curatorial care, my commission of Dahlberg and Olsson, and the undecidability that this project both encourages and is haunted by. If we take these points in reverse order, its undecidability partly hinges on the inscrutable distribution of what Derrida terms the *thing.* This thing, this spectre, which is not identical with itself,[51] appears incomprehensible to us. It may call for interpretation but at the same time it defies such designation. So when we, as is the case here, approach an archive, we cannot actually know what it is we are looking at and listening to. What we encounter are not matters of fact but something altogether more elusive and more uncertain—something that does not reveal itself to us. This unknowability is troubling, for sure, but it might just also be what makes the archive such a favoured haunt for knowledge production. Because if the archive was entirely transparent, univocal, and immediately comprehensible, would there be anything to truly learn from it? Would we bother to concern ourselves with the archive if it did not ceaselessly keep something from us? Does the archive not evoke our curiosity precisely because we cannot figure it out?

Now, I would argue that we almost never take on such problems on our own. Of course, not everyone resorts to literally asking someone else to join the inquiry, as I have done here, but do we not always gather around a problem a number of relevant and concerned parties that can help us identify and discuss the matter in question? Do we not negotiate, complicate, and dispute our problems with others, regardless of whether their presence is corporeal or only virtual, in the form of their writings? Rounding up such inquisitive get-togethers is how philosopher and sociologist Bruno Latour proposes that we deal with matters that prove non-factual and uncertain, that is, matters of concern,[52] and this thesis revolves around two such disquieting matters. First of all, of course, the DR Archive, that—as I argue in Chapter 1—presents itself as a disconcerting thing, and around which my commission assembles Dahlberg and Olsson. By way of this coming together, the artists designate their respective matters of concern and begin to develop their inquiries. The ensuing artworks can also be considered matters of concern on account of their inherent complexity, and in Chapters 2 and

[51] The book in which Derrida develops his hauntology is precisely entitled *Specters of Marx*—there is always more than one of them (and less than one). Derrida, *Specters of Marx*, 1–2.
[52] Bruno Latour, "Why Has Critique Run out of Steam? From Matters of Fact to Matters of Concern," *Critical Inquiry* 30, no. 2 (January 2004): 246. Latour further develops his notion of matters of concern in an article from the following year, see Bruno Latour, "From Realpolitik to Dingpolitik or How to Make Things Public," in *Making Things Public: Atmospheres of Democracy*, ed. Bruno Latour and Peter Weibel (Cambridge, Mass. : [Karlsruhe, Germany]: MIT Press ; ZKM/Center for Art and Media in Karlsruhe, 2005), 4–31.

3 I seek out conversation partners who, like myself, concern themselves with issues brought to the fore by the artworks, or parties that may contribute to the process of making these issues appear. In different ways, the artworks lend themselves to such gatherings; they trigger, as Latour says, "new occasions to differ and dispute."[53]

What is crucial in both cases described above is of course not only to set up these gatherings, but also to support and sustain them—to care for these precarious configurations. Latour assigns this attentive undertaking to the critic,[54] but following the reconceptualisation of the curator as someone who cares, it would indeed also seem to be an obvious task for the curator. I assemble by selecting and commissioning Dahlberg and Olsson to work with the DR Archive as well as by gathering a number of interlocutors around their ensuing artworks. And I care for these sometimes divisive get-togethers by enabling both the artists and the artworks to work and by supporting them as well as the configurations that they are part of through my curatorial practice.[55] What I propose to do in this thesis is, in other words, to revitalise the notion of curatorial care with a little help from Latour, Foucault and Derrida.

Thesis Structure

Following these introductory manoeuvres, the four chapters of this thesis will delve into my commission of Dahlberg and Olsson. Using Latour's notion of matters of concern as a simple model, the purpose of the first chapter, "Beginnings on End," is two-fold. I argue that the DR Archive not merely is something the artists and I are compelled to engage with, but that it also gives us reason to be concerned, and second, I investigate the artists' interactions with the DR Archive and argue how they constitute efforts to designate a matter of concern. The chapter opens with analyses of two instances of uncertainty that I have encountered in the DR Archive: a peculiar distribution of blue pieces of paper in a remote part of the archive and the question of the beginning(s) of the DR Archive. These analyses substantiate my initial inkling that we cannot know for sure what we are dealing with when we approach the DR Archive. The second half of the chapter deals first with Dahlberg's engagement with the DR Archive; it is based on her own written reflections on the process, and discusses both her initial reaction to the DR Archive (one of apathy) and her efforts to identify an archival

[53] Latour, “From Realpolitik to Dingpolitik”, 5. I want to make clear that in the articles above Latour talks about objects and not artworks in particular, but I find that this notion of his also can be applied to art. The distinction between matters-of-fact and matter-of-concern is, however, not quite as effective in the arts, because artworks, almost by definition, would appear to be matters-of-concern.
[54] Latour, “Why Has Critique Run out of Steam?”, 246.
[55] Latour, “From Realpolitik to Dingpolitik”, 13.

document that lends itself to her work. Olsson's engagement with the DR Archive is much more elusive—not least because he decided to abandon the possibility of using any material from the DR Archive just a week before the premiere of his performance. My inquiry into Olsson's process is, for that reason, limited to a press photograph and a certain measure of speculation as to how he can be said to concern himself with the DR Archive by turning his back on it.

In the second chapter, "Time and Time Again," I engage in a close reading of Dahlberg's video work, "Fifty Minutes in Half an Hour," which she produced in response to my commission, and I situate it in the context of her ensuing solo exhibition, *This Time It's Political*, which I curated at The Museum of Contemporary Art in Roskilde. By pursuing a number of repetitive motifs, I propose that the exhibition produces two modes, one of inoperability and one of operability. Based on a radio programme on working conditions, "Fifty Minutes in Half an Hour" rehearses a number of activities that have been separated from the sphere of common use into a state of docility in which use is impossible; cost-efficient bodily movements, instrumentalised time—even the archival recording has been deprived of its use value. But by way of the video's iterations, these separations are, however, undone, and for a short while they become pure means.[56] The additional three works of the exhibition constitute minor, informal archives compiled and devised by Dahlberg, and, unlike "Fifty Minutes in Half an Hour," they hinge on cumulation and operability. In particular, "A Room of One's Own / A Thousand Libraries" from 2006—which compiles almost 50 years of marginal notes from Swedish library copies of Virginia Woolf's essay *A Room of One's Own*—generates both collective agency and aspiration on account of its archival gesture. Wrapping up the chapter, I argue that the politics referred to by the title of the exhibition is performed exactly through these instances of inoperability and operability.

Chapter 3, "The Flash and The Spectre," proceeds by untangling the workings of the past in Olsson's performance, *DR P3. 1963-2013. 50 Years of Danish State Authorised Pop Radio.* Here I propose that the performance at large produces two temporalities: one that is characterised by the flash as per Walter Benjamin's understanding of remembrance, and another, less conspicuous, temporality of the spectre that Olsson both channels and produces with his voice. In the first part of the chapter, I carry out a close reading of aspects of Olsson performance using three figures described by Benjamin—the collector, the storyteller, and the historian—as points of reference. Leaving behind the official documents of the DR

[56] This argument, of course, relies on Giorgio Agamben's notion of profanation, which I will extend on in more detail in Chapter 2.

Archive, Olsson explores the byways of radio history through a miscellaneous assortment of nugatory documents and objects. By tracing out the contours of these figures in Olsson's performance, I am able to elucidate the subversive potentiality of his digressive narrative. The second part of the chapter pursues a ghostly presence that haunts the performance even before it begins. In advance of the performance Olsson tells a humorous anecdote about a ventriloquist and a sound check, and this *exergue*-like anecdote summonses a host of disembodied voices. Using this anecdote as a starting-point, I trace an electrified history of spectral agency that unsettles the performance both temporally and epistemically.

Chapter 4, "Working Commissions", returns to the act of commissioning in order to flesh out my curatorial operations *post facto*. The main argument of the chapter is that the commission can be regarded as a response to a need of the place or context that it adheres to, in this case the DR Archive. By commissioning Dahlberg and Olsson I extend to them a specific undertaking, and in doing so I also acknowledge and designate a need for a certain kind of work to be done. The aim of this chapter is therefore to develop the commission as a mode of inquiry and to explicate methodological implications from my curatorial operations. Unpacking and conceptualising the act of commissioning enables me explicate a simple diagram of the commission, which maps out the relations of the configuration of curator, DR Archive, artists, and (the prospect of) artworks that the commission establishes. But while this diagram proves to be most useful when it comes to understanding the relations of the commission, it cannot account for the precariousness of the configuration. Both the artists' practices as well as the DR Archive require the work of an assiduous operator, a curator. I therefore propose that the notion of curatorial care is reinvigorated and modelled on Derrida's concept of the supplement in order to factor in the dependence and independence that determine the relationship between curator and artist. Derrida's curious supplement can also begin to account for the workings of the commission as a response to a need. Concluding the chapter, I reflect on the commission and the relations it establishes in the context of a co-operation.

1. **Beginnings on End:** Elusive Origins and the Difficulties of Getting Started

When I first visited the part of the DR Archive that is located in the Copenhagen suburb of Søborg in 2011, I noticed a peculiar distribution of blue pieces of paper inserted between the approximately 180,000 shelved reel-to-reel tapes, at intervals of ½ -1 metres. The extensive use of blue papers seemed to indicate a system of some sort, but there was no immediate explanation to be found. The archive in Søborg contains what used to be called the Tape Archive (Båndarkivet), which has served as an in-house production archive[57] to DR since 1949.[58] Only a few years before my visit, in 2007, the Tape Archive, along with numerous smaller archives and archival matter—the sound archive, the lacquer disc archive, private archives of radio recordings donated to DR, old archival registers (folios, appendixes, index cards, listening reports) etc.—had been moved from the old Radio House on Rosenørns Allé in Copenhagen to this large basement in Søborg[59] due to lack of space in the new DR complex, The DR City, in Ørestad.

The blue papers, I learned from DR archivist Klavs Lund, were an ad-hoc solution in the midst of the moving process to secure the order of the Tape Archive. At the old Radio House, the Tape Archive had annexed numerous large basement spaces over the years, and an archiving system had been developed that cross-referenced technical numbers, which identified the tape, and sequential shelf numbers, which identified the location of the tape. Accordingly, the key to retrieving any tape from the Tape Archive involved matching the technical number with the shelf number. The shelves in the basements of the old Radio House were, however, different from the new compact archiving system in Søborg; they varied in length and here and there tapes were piled up on top of the shelved tapes due to lack of space. One shelf might hold 30 tapes and another shelf 50 tapes. This system made the order of the archive dependent not only on technical numbers and shelf numbers but also on

[57] The purpose of the archive was to support reproduction, repeats, and recycling rather than preservation for posterity. Wolfgang Ernst describes a similar archival practice in German public broadcast services, see Wolfgang Ernst, *Digital Memory and the Archive*, ed. Jussi Parikka (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2013), 95.
[58] According to DR archivist Klavs Lund in interview conducted on February 11, 2013.
[59] All these archives—including the Tape Archive—are now usually referred to as the Remote Archive, but I will use their old names whenever differentiation is necessary.

1.1: The Voice Archive, The Radio House, Copenhagen, May 2007. Photo: Klavs Lund
1.2: The Remote Archive, Søborg, January 2011. Photo: Trine Friis Sørensen

the physical architecture of the archive and the old Radio House itself. In order to maintain this system on the long shelves of the new compact archiving system in Søborg, the archivists came up with the idea of inserting these blue pieces of paper between the tapes to mark the point where one shelf ended and another began. These shelf sections—demarcated by blue pieces of paper—were subsequently labelled with corresponding shelf numbers. In this way, the main function of the blue pieces of paper is to map out the former architecture of the Tape Archive, which effectively is superimposed onto this new location.

What we have here—this conjunction of place and order—illustrates more or less exactly what Derrida terms the *topo-nomology* of the archive, that is to say, the intersection of the topological and the nomological, the place and the law; an indispensable principle of the archive according to Derrida.[60] The ordering of the Tape Archive is conditioned by its place—not only by the house in Søborg where it currently dwells but also and crucially by its previous domicile in Copenhagen. The initial location of the archive institutes and enforces its order, and it is only through the structural repetition of this architecture that the archive and its topo-nomology can be retained. But while this system of blue papers iterates the order of the archive according to which the reel-to-reel tapes are organised and can be recovered, it also insistently reminds us of the place that has been replaced. In the guise of blue papers, the structure of the original house, the first home of the Tape Archive, appears in vestigial form. My claim is not that the system of blue papers does not work; it does. The order has been restored after the move and the reel-to-reel tapes are once again retrievable. As an iteration, this reoccurring order, however, differs from the previous one; it is not at one with itself but is effectively haunted—*heimgesucht*—by its former domicile, or—as Derrida has phrased it—"the structure of the archive is *spectral*."[61]

Unpacking an Archive

If the DR Archive indeed is something that we, the artists and I, are not only compelled to engage with on account of the commissions, LARM's as well as my own, but something we also feel the need to concern ourselves with, we might ask what prompts this concern? What is it about the DR Archive that makes us concerned? What is this *thing* on which this project pivots and how does it intimate elusiveness and undecidability? Now, just to clarify, there are already a couple of *things* at work in this thesis, Latour's thing, which I will discuss shortly,

[60] Derrida, *Archive Fever*, 3.
[61] Ibid., 84.

and Derrida's thing—an unnameable and undecidable thing which, for that reason, Derrida also refers to as spectre, ghost or spirit. To this end, it does not really make much sense to compare Latour's and Derrida's things, because Derrida's thing is not *a* thing, but *some* thing[62] that haunts us and demands a response. There is, however, crucially, no coming to terms with this thing; we cannot come up with a response that can lay the spectre to rest, and anyone claiming to do so would be performing an act of violence.

Things are, on the other hand, very different if we turn to Latour. His thing is in a certain sense an analytical gesture; it has to do with acknowledging the diversity of the things in front of us, and the multifarious inquiries we have to conduct in order to come to terms with them. Put differently, his thing is both the matter of concern around which we gather and the gathering itself.[63] Because objects—Latour has come to realise—do not present themselves as straightforward and discernible, and furthermore, proclaimed facts have gained a reputation for being concocted. Latour hence shifts his attention from matters of fact to matters of concern, and argues that we need to approach, to populate, these uncertain matters in an altogether more considerate manner. We are not out to resolve these matters of concern—they may not even be resolvable—but we must gather around them and conduct multifarious inquiries. What I would like to do here is borrow Latour's notion of matters of concern and use it as a simple model for talking about the DR Archive and Dahlberg and Olsson's engagement with it. I will, in other words, engage in a little sampling: the chapter is loosely modelled on Latour's analytical gesture pertaining to his understanding of a thing—of coming together and addressing a matter of concern—but the matter of concern here, the DR Archive, is undeniably more of a Derridian thing.

The purpose of this chapter is two-fold; through analytical inquiries into the DR Archive I will first substantiate my assertion that this archive does indeed give us reason to be concerned; that there is a certain archival unrest that does not allow us to pin it down as a matter of fact. I will go about this undertaking by addressing two instances of uncertainty that I have encountered in my dealings with the DR Archive: the peculiar distribution of blue pieces of paper in a remote part of the DR Archive described above, and the question of the

[62] To make everything even more complicated, there are, furthermore, three things that concern this *thing* that Derrida talks about: mourning, the condition of language, and work, that is, the power of transformation. Derrida, *Specters of Marx*, 9.

[63] Latour explains that readers of dictionaries (specifically, the entry "Thing") and Heidegger will know that the word "thing" or "Ding" originally designated a certain type of archaic assembly, that is, for many centuries these words have referenced "the issue that brings people together because it divides them." Latour, "From Realpolitik to Dingpolitik," 12-13. The Danish parliament too references this tradition; it is called "Folketinget" or The People's Thing.

beginning(s) of the DR Archive. What distinguishes both these examples is that they pertain to the analogue DR Archive, and not the digital. This might be somewhat unexpected given the fact that it is the advent of the digital that prompted this project in the first place. But while the digitalisation of the DR Archive has occasioned this project, it does not only make the archive available to us as digital files, it has also opened the door to the analogue archive. In so far as the digital introduces a new archival paradigm, the inclination to explore the paradigm that preceded it—i.e. the analogue—is perhaps not so surprising. The digital may even boost the nostalgic attraction of the analogue archive precisely because it threatens to make it obsolete. In fact, the fossilisation has already taken place, because although the digitalisation process is far from finished, the analogue archive has already effectively been muted. That is, any recording one might want to listen to from the DR Archive will be digitalised—if this has not already happened—and made available via LARM.fm. But even in this state of muteness, the analogue archive holds great evocative power. In his press photograph, Olsson poses in front of shelves of reel-to-reel tapes, and Dahlberg describes in considerable detail her expectations and subsequent experience of visiting the analogue archive. I have also felt the pull of the analogue archive, and returning there on a number of occasions with the artists, talking to Klavs Lund, the archivist, and eventually sitting down with him to get the whole story about the DR Archive, led me to choose two examples from the analogue archive to actualise this archive as a matter of concern.

The other purpose of this chapter is to investigate Dahlberg and Olsson's approaches to the DR Archive, that is, how they went about engaging with the archive and eventually identified an archival matter that evoked their concern. Dahlberg and Olsson's approaches to the archive were quite different. Dahlberg spent many hours sifting through the archive; she worked closely with the DR archivists, and also relied on interfaces and systems for searching and recovery within the archive. Afterwards, I asked her to reflect on her engagement with the DR Archive by answering a handful of questions, and her answers are the nucleus of my examination here. Olsson's engagement with the DR Archive was, on the other hand, more elusive. Moreover, he decided to sidestep the DR Archive shortly before the premiere of his performance due to a dispute with the DR Sales Department, hence refraining from using any material from the DR Archive. He did however have a press photograph taken in the archive a couple of months before his performance tour. Towards the end of this chapter, I will use this photograph as a jumping-off point to ponder if and how Olsson can be said to engage with the archive now that he has turned his back on it.

Beginnings

The Tape Archive dates back to 1949. At least, this is as far back as Lund, the archivist, can trace any documentation of it. But it might go even further back. DR had already started testing magnetic tape recorders in 1937 and despite WW2 and the German occupation—or maybe precisely because of it—DR had access to German-produced tapes up through the 1940s.[64] Should the beginning of the Tape Archive be established at the point when DR started testing this new technology and gradually began accumulating tapes? Or was it even earlier, when the technology supporting the Tape Archive, the Magnetophon, was first demonstrated in 1935 at the Internationale Funkausstellung Berlin (IFA)[65] by the German-Austrian engineer Fritz Pfleumer? Or when he patented his invention of thin paper coated with iron oxide powder using lacquer as glue in 1928? Maybe we need to go even further back, to DR's first radio broadcast on April 1, 1925 and the founding of The State Radiophony (Statsradiofonien),[66] or further back still to the early days of radio and wireless communication in the 19th century? Should we, like media archaeologist Wolfgang Ernst, focus our attention on the material media technologies that condition the production of culture?[67] Are these technological objects time machines that will bring us back, if not to the beginning, then at least to an understanding of how media profoundly condition how we can know things?

Or did the Tape Archive not become an archive until it was labelled as such, until it was *called* an archive? The precise moment of the naming of the Tape Archive—if there was ever such a moment—escapes recollection today. Lund has come across references to a *distribution office* (fordelingskontor), an *operations depository* (driftsdepot), and a *playback centre* (afviklingscentral) in paperwork from the late 1940s and early 1950s. These names, he believes, refer to what would later become the Tape Archive.[68] Perhaps the Tape Archive only became an archive in name in order to distinguish it from another archive, the Voice Archive (Stemmearkivet), which was founded in 1952. Established in order to store and

[64] DR did not use magnetic tape recorders for studio recordings until the beginning of the 1950s, but up through the 1940s they were used for short wave radio production and to record the BBC's transmissions to Denmark for German radio censors, who were stationed at The Radio House. See DR Museum, "Den Første Båndmaskine," [The First Tape Recorder] DR Museum, accessed August 14, 2014, http://www.drmuseum.dk/35241919.
[65] International radio exhibition Berlin, aka Berlin Radio Show, see http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Internationale_Funkausstellung_Berlin (Accessed November 28, 2014)
[66] In 1959, the State Radiophony changed its name to Denmark's Radio (Danmarks Radio), which in 1996 was changed to DR.
[67] See Ernst, *Digital Memory and the Archive*, 1–265.
[68] Interview with DR archivist Klavs Lund conducted on February 11, 2013.

preserve recordings of prominent voices and events of historical significance, the Voice Archive was DR's first official archive and marks the beginning of a conscious archival practice at DR. The Voice Archive even has a founding document—at least this is how the archivists refer to the earliest document mentioning the Voice Archive.[69] However, this document—a letter dated April 15, 1952—does not actually state that 1952 was the year that the Voice Archive was established. Rather, the document reads: "Some years ago, the State Radiophony established a "voice archive" in which recordings of prominent voices and events of historical significance are stored,"[70] and the letter proceeds to invite an unnamed person to join a committee to establish guidelines for the Voice Archive. So, the beginning that this "founding document" supposedly documents is only a reference to the beginning.

It appears that we cannot identify the initial gestures that instituted the Tape Archive and the Voice Archive. In fact, we cannot even determine whether there were ever such moments, because, as the above inventory of possible beginnings demonstrates, what would indeed define such beginnings? When does something become an archive?[71] Is it a matter of the quantity of tapes? Did the archives begin when a tall stack of reel-to-reel tapes eventually tumbled to the ground and someone had to pick them up? Is it the introduction of a system of retrieval, the technological conditions, or the naming of the archive—the belated reference in a letter that performatively instates the beginning as already in the past? Or is it the

[69] At a LARM seminar on November 8, 2012, DR archivists Klavs Lund and Per Holst referred to this 1952 document mentioning the Voice Archive as the founding document. It appears to be generally accepted that the Voice Archive was established in 1952 despite the scarcity of written documentation and the questionable nature of the documentation that does exist—a testament to the predominantly oral delivery of the history of the DR Archive. A website on Danish radio, www.danskradio.dk/historien.html (accessed November 27, 2014), founded by a radio aficionado, for example, corroborates this year, and scholar Erik Granly Jensen confirms the year, however introducing the founding document as a "so-called founding document" (my translation). Erik Granly Jensen, "Arkiver og Barrikader. Digitaliseringen af DR's radioarkiver i kulturhistorisk perspektiv. Rydningen af Byggeren (1980) som eksempel," [Archives and Barricades. The Digitalisation of DR's Radio Archives in a Cultural Historical Perspektive. The Clearing of "Byggeren" as Example] in *Kultur & Klasse*, no. 117 (2014): 72.

[70] My translation, the original Danish version reads: "Statsradiofonien har for nogle år siden etableret et "stemmearkiv", hvor man placerer optagelser af kendte stemmer og af begivenheder af historisk art."

[71] I am indebted to Rebecca Comay for the idea of carrying out such an insistent search for a beginning. She introduces the anthology *Lost in the Archives* by performing a similar pursuit; see Comay, "Introduction," 12–15. It should be safe to assume that Comay, in this introduction, is indebted to Derrida, who has described the beginning, the origin, of the archive as something that we passionately, nostalgically, and compulsively are drawn to. The careful preservation of archival documents is indicative of this desire, but it is of course impossible to return to that initial moment of impression. The question of beginnings also haunts the structure of Derrida's *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression,* which displays some hesitation with regards to getting started. It lingers with an exergue (7-23), a preamble (25-31), and a foreword (33-81) before finally getting to the theses (83-95) and a postscript (97-101). Furthermore, Derrida opens the book with the following sentence: "Let us not begin at the beginning, nor even at the archive." (Derrida, *Archive Fever*, 1.) He begins instead with the word *archive*, specifically the Greek work *arkhē*, which means both commencement and commandment. The question of the beginning is, in other words, central to Derrida's notion of the archive, but all the same, both troubling and troubled.

documented appointment of a committee that will establish guidelines for its "updating, renewal, collaboration with similar institutions etc."[72] that conclusively inaugurates the Voice Archive? This letter is after all referred to as the founding document, and 1952 is accordingly considered to be the year the Voice Archive was established.

Although the letter very clearly states that the Voice Archive was established "some years ago," perhaps the archivists' decision to nonetheless deem 1952 the founding year of the Voice Archive is not so confounding after all. As the keepers and guardians of the archive, they are, if we again turn to Derrida, entrusted with the task of unifying, identifying and classifying as well as that of consignation, of gathering together signs. Of consignation, Derrida writes that it "aims to coordinate a single corpus, in a system or a synchrony in which all elements articulate the unity of an ideal configuration. In an archive, there should not be any absolute dissociation, any heterogeneity or *secret* which could separate (*secernere*), or partition, in an absolute manner."[73] Not being able to determine the beginning of an archive and relying on a nonspecific reference to the beginning "some years ago"—would these factors in themselves not begin to unhinge this desired synchrony of the archive? Would such a dicey beginning not foster heterogeneity and dissociation? In fact, would it not be disconcerting if this system, this device, this very condition for the writing and recollection of history, was unable to produce a conclusive history of its own? It is surely better to begin with a documented event, with some written proof (*consignatio*);[74] then at least there is certainty and intention behind the beginning. What is ironic here is of course that this covert effort to be rid of the uncertainty of "some years ago" and instead establish an unequivocal beginning in itself produces a secret. But a secret, it appears, is preferable to uncertainty.

It seems reasonable to conclude that both examples above—the blue papers and the question of the beginnings of the Tape Archive and the Voice Archive—are representative of concerted efforts to keep the archive in check. But what we also know by now is that this apparent synchrony unravels on closer inspection: The blue papers simultaneously replace and reinstate the order of the Tape Archive, while the 'founding document' actually declares the Voice Archive to have been instituted several years prior to the claimed date of its establishment. In other words, we cannot rely on the immediate appearances of these

[72] My translation, the original Danish version reads: "a jourføring, fornyelse, samarbejde med andre lignende institutioner m.v."
[73] Derrida, *Archive Fever*, 3.
[74] *A Latin Dictionary,* s.v. “consignatio”, accessed August 18, 2014, (Oxford. Clarendon Press. 1879), http://www.perseus.tufts.edu

archives; they are not (only) what they seem, and this uncertainty is concerning. I have, as I described earlier, been commissioned to engage with this archive, but as the above analysis has shown, the archive is not what it seems. The particular archival instances that I have developed here may not be the issues that the artists eventually engage with, but they certainly support the inkling that the DR Archive is something that we ought to concern ourselves with. As I briefly touched upon in the beginning of this chapter, Latour advises that we gather around such matters of concern and initiate a multifaceted inquiry, and that, I would argue, is exactly what I do by commissioning Dahlberg and Olsson to engage with the DR Archive and produce artworks in relation to it. On account of their previous work, they are exactly the kind of "legitimate people" that Latour calls for,[75] and by accepting the commission they agree to ponder and discuss the problem of the archive. Dahlberg and Olsson of course perform individual inquiries, and they each round up further participants to populate their investigations. In fact, what Dahlberg's engagement with the DR Archive led her to do corresponds surprisingly well with Latour's inquisitive get-togethers.

Starting Over

Dahlberg is no stranger to archives. Several of her previous artworks can be said to constitute minor, informal archives, especially *A Room of One's Own / A Thousand Libraries* (2006) and *No unease can be noticed, all are happy and friendly* (2010), which were both included in the exhibition following her work with the DR Archive.[76] She is no stranger to the repetitive and time-consuming work of the archivist, because the artworks above exactly required such laborious efforts. She has hand-traced underlinings and marginal notes of more than 100 Swedish library copies of Virginia Woolf's essay *A Room of One's Own*, and she has compiled, categorised, translated, and labelled around 600 postcards sent from Jerusalem to Sweden during the larger part of the 20th century. These efforts are evidence of meticulousness and diligence on Dahlberg's part, perhaps even an inclination towards the orderly. Dahlberg has, however, never worked with an institutional archive before and her engagement with the DR Archive is very different from her previous archival work. Rather than being a producer of the archive, she now becomes a user, and rather than instituting the laws of the archive, she now has to abide by already established laws. As I mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, I asked Dahlberg to reflect on her work with the DR Archive, and

[75] Latour, "From Realpolitik to Dingpolitik," 6.
[76] I analyse these works in Chapter 2.

the following pages therefore unfold as an annotated conversation with Dahlberg, relying on extensive quotes from her written account.

> I began with compiling a sort of reading list on the subject. For a long time I've been making works that in themselves are compilations of materials, or archives of sorts. But I had never before thought about my work in the context of archival theory so I saw this, initially, as a way of deepening my knowledge and understanding of the theoretical framework covering the notion of the archive. My earlier work I had seen more as attempts to give collective agency and context to activities that might initially seem as manifestations of individuality, like the writing of postcards, or book marginalia. This is the first time I have used an already existing archive as a starting point for a project.
>
> But one of the first things I did was to visit the place, to see it and to touch it. However, as in most cases with archives of this kind, there is not much to see and its materiality is quite evasive. I had this image in my mind of the archive as an infinite source of histories, facts and narratives ready to be found. But in its physicality it's, at its best', temperate room after temperate room filled with endless shelves of magnetic recording tape. I say "at its best" because these are gradually being digitalized into an even less tangible material state.
>
> The first experience was one of confusion. Similar to visiting the remnants of ancient civilizations, it promises a key to past events, an understanding of history and hence of yourself. But once there you are left to your own futility; your sudden awareness of, not just how little you do know, but how the things you would have liked to know are inaccessible, not there anymore, or perhaps never were.
>
> I entered the archive with a sense of megalomania and left with apathy. Perhaps because of this, my course of action became to approach the archive by simply accepting its internal logic. To use the already existing tools for searching material, to ask the archivists about their work and their experiences; to try and understand the history of the archiving process itself.[77]

What I find most striking about Dahlberg's description here is the sense of resignation that soon supersedes her initial conception upon visiting the analogue archive for the first time. The visit to the DR Archive produces a distinct and sudden transition from anticipation to disillusionment. While the archives of her earlier artworks are productive devices that induce collective agency, the DR Archive is an entirely different construct—its sheer size alone is overwhelming—and it leaves Dahlberg with a feeling of apathy rather than empowerment. Her previous archival encounters have consisted in collecting and organising postcards or marginalia and hereby designating her matter of concern, but the DR Archive is already there; collected, classified, and put in its proper place. But despite the instituted order, the archive is not immediately decipherable; Dahlberg refers to the materiality of the DR Archive as evasive—perhaps because the reel-to-reel tapes, unlike handwriting for example, only become accessible by way of a technological medium, a reel-to-reel tape recorder. Dahlberg's

[77] Kajsa Dahlberg to Trine Friis Sørensen, "Frågor och Svar," [Questions and Answers], e-mail, July 14, 2013.

desire to touch the archive, which no doubt stems from her previous, very hands-on archival experiences, cannot be satisfied. Sound as a medium is literally untouchable[78] and stored, as it is, on reel-to-reel tapes kept inside cardboard cassettes lined up side-by-side on shelf after shelf may just add to Dahlberg's sense of distance between herself and the DR Archive. I detect an inclination towards tangible, material objects on Dahlberg's part; digitalisation at least does not ameliorate her increasing despair. Rather, it seems that these technological mediations render the traces of the past ever more immaterial, and as a consequence, impalpable, unreachable by hand.

So, as Dahlberg sums up her initial feelings, it is with a sense of apathy that she leaves the DR Archive after her first visit and commences her work. The raison d'être of any archive, its fundamental promise to us—that of providing a key to the past—is not one that the DR Archive is able to fulfil, at least not on account of this first visit. The question is, of course, whether an archive will ever prove to be capable of providing such access; Dahlberg's first inquiry into the DR Archive, which I describe below, indicates that even material that has been included in the DR Archive is not readily accessible. Dahlberg's way out of the initial archival dead-end was to simply accept the internal logic of the DR Archive. There is certainly a hint of resignation in this reasoning; the dejected vastness of an institutional archive, it seems, has from the outset shaped Dahlberg's engagement to the DR Archive. However, while this first visit to the DR Archive may have been discouraging—confusing even—to Dahlberg, she did not remain daunted for long.

Archival Restraints

> As a way to somehow challenge this logic of the archive, my initial idea was to search for and compile all the segments in the archive in which people spoke from a position of being citizens. In Sweden we have a program on Channel One called "Ring P1" (Call P1) that I listen to more or less every day. The idea of the program is very simple: anyone can call in to talk about anything. There is a host in the studio receiving the calls, sometimes commenting or asking questions, but for the most part people just speak their mind about politics, recent events; complaining about injustices or things they find annoying and sometimes they have suggestions for changes to those in power. I find it interesting to listen to what people say when they speak out of a need to address "everyone". And even more interesting: that they speak, not from a position of expertise or power, but from a position of being a member of society or part of a community. With ”Ring P1” in mind I thought it would be interesting to try and find these segments in a radio archive that do not already have this framed idea, but where I would have to find them here and there as part of other programs, reports or radio interviews. This

[78] It is of course possible to feel physically touched by loud sounds or music—in particular low-frequency sounds can reverberate in the chest. Also, we can feel emotionally touched by sounds or music, but to touch sound in the tactile way that Dahlberg would seem to desire is not possible.

> proved impossible, of course, and it was the first time that I really understood the concept of meta-data in relation to an archive. What can be found through the search tools is only that which the archivists see as the important main components of a certain program. Making this project would mean re-archiving the archive from this particular point of interest, all the hundred thousand posts.[79]

In the quote above, Dahlberg describes the first idea that she tried out in relation to the DR Archive, one that, as she recounts, unfortunately proved impossible to realise. But the idea is interesting and brings to light an almost emblematic aspect of the archive. What Dahlberg is looking for—comments made by the (wo)man on the street—is very likely to be found in a variety of DR programs, from news to features, and their purpose is in most cases to voice the opinion of the ordinary non-expert on a topic of current interest. Dahlberg's premise for searching for these comments in the archive is not so much what these ordinary people talk about, i.e. the topic, but rather that they, as Dahlberg phrases it, "speak (...) from a position of being a member of society or part of a community." Now, since these kinds of comments do not have their own radio show in Denmark, but are discretely scattered throughout countless radio programs supporting or complicating a given topic, the task of finding them is almost impossible. As Dahlberg notes, meta-data plays a crucial part in such an undertaking, but it would of course need to be the right kind of meta-data. That is, in order to find these common voices in the DR Archive it is essential that archivists throughout the years have registered such occurrences in the meta-data. After searching the databases, both LARM.fm and DR's internal systems, Dahlberg could conclude that this—with very few exceptions—has not been the case.

In other words, what Dahlberg's idea about common voices makes abundantly clear is that it is the archiving—the way something is registered and the kind of information that is attached to it—that determines what we are able to retrieve from the archive. So, while the radio provides these common voices with an opportunity to be heard, the archive, in a certain sense, takes it away. Without the necessary meta-data, these common voices remain marginalised and largely inaccessible—unless, of course, one were to listen through the entire archive, which would indeed be a formidable quest. Following Dahlberg's discouraging first visit to the archive and her ensuing feeling of apathy, this search for common voices in the archive, I would argue, does however indicate that she indeed is concerned about the DR Archive.

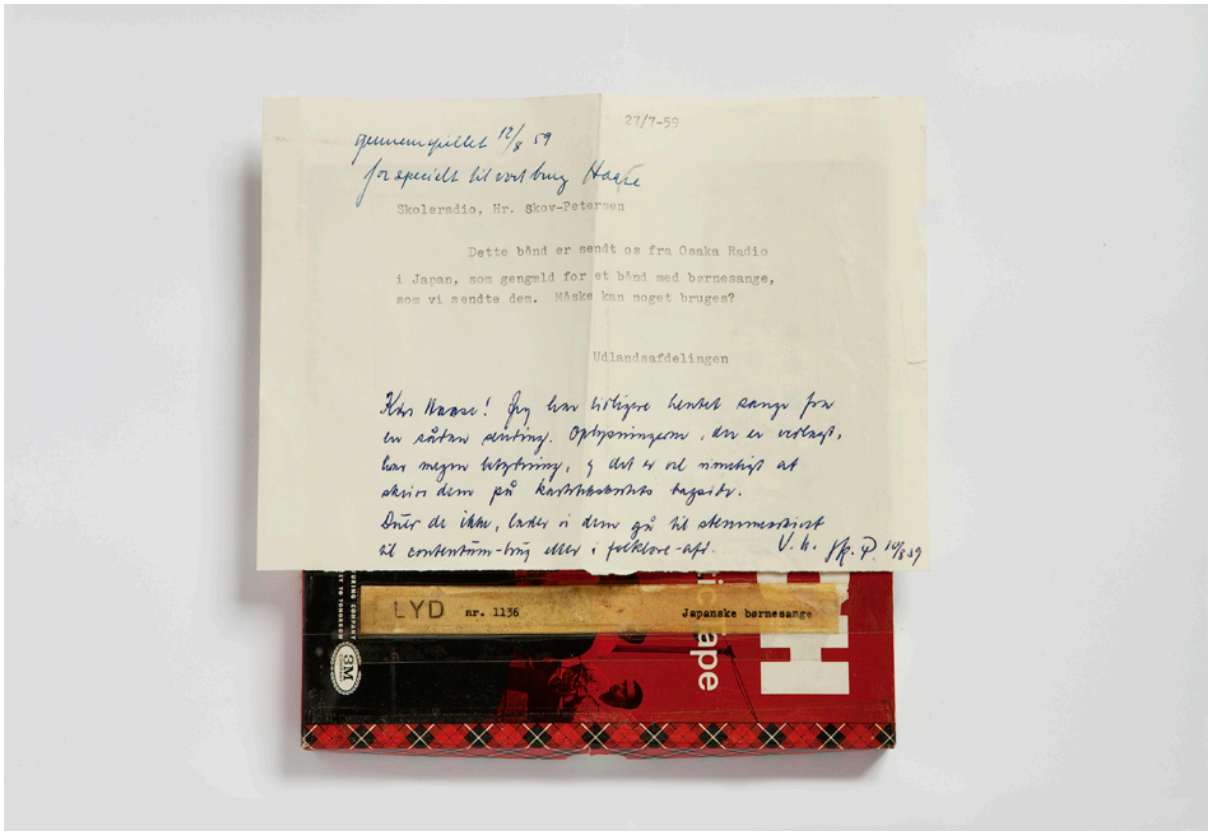
[79] Ibid.

Concern Beyond the Archive

> My second project and engagement with the archive was a direct consequence of my collaboration with Klavs. This was my engagement with the so-called "sound archive". Klavs told me he had seen some bags of old tapes belonging to this archive stored away somewhere. The sound archive consists of a large collection of sounds that are meant to give context, or to illustrate an environment, for the production of radio programs. These might be for example the sound of various birds, the Atlantic Ocean or the street of a specific city. But in this archive there also turned out to be many recordings that are not only of sound, but also of language. These are first and foremost tapes from countries and places where the language, for different reasons, was inaccessible for the person who made the recording. These might be early recordings from Greenland or of travels through Africa or the Middle East.
>
> Klavs found the bags of old tapes and I started listening and in some cases translating the speech or songs on the tapes. Although for the most part it is impossible to restore the identity or even the geographical location of the people singing or speaking, I've been interested in disclosing the narratives in these tapes, which have been concealed within the logic of this specific archive. I still see this as a work in progress. However, I dropped the project because it required so much time and work to find new translators to work with for nearly every recording, and I didn't think that this project alone would work for the exhibition in Roskilde. For me it was too tightly bound to the archive itself, and after coming as far as I had in the research, it still hadn't opened up for a broader discussion.[80]

Like the common voices, the old reel-to-reel tape sound archive is also a marginalised aspect of the DR Archive. What Dahlberg came across was not carefully catalogued recordings of steam ships and foghorns and harbour ambiences, eligible for maritime-themed programs. She happened upon some bags of old tapes containing a hotchpotch of various recordings, some of them eligible for a sound archive—recordings of applause in a concert hall, for example—but the bag also contained field recordings of people playing music, talking, and singing in numerous languages. For example, tape no. 186 contains recordings of three Arabic gramophone records played back on a portable gramophone, followed by a song performed by a Swahili woman, and another tape, registered as "Sound no. 1105," opens with three melodies performed on the carillon of The Church of the Holy Spirit (Helligåndskirken) in Copenhagen, and is followed by seven recordings of Nepalese folk music; each track is briefly described on the cardboard cassette. One tape, no. 6-4 (N), consisting of recordings of Japanese children's songs, even discloses a curious practice of swapping recordings. In return for a tape of (presumably Danish) children's songs, Osaka Radio in Japan in 1959 shipped a tape of Japanese children's songs to DR—as DR's International Division informs a gentleman

[80] Ibid.



Tape Nr: 6-4(N)

Japanese children's songs

27/7-59

(In handwriting)
Listened through 12/8 59
Particularly for our use, Haase

School Radio, Mr. Skov-Petersen

This tape was sent to us from Osaka Radio in Japan, in return for a tape with children's songs that we sent them. Maybe some of it can be used?

The International Division

(In handwriting)
Dear Haase! I have previously collected songs from such a shipment. The information attached has much significance, so it's probably fair to write it on the back of the index card. If they are not good enough, we let them go to the sound archive for background sound, or to the folklore department.

Best Sk.P (Skov-Petersen) 10/8 59

1.3: Tape no. 6-4 (N), The Old Sound Archive, 2012, Photo: Dorte Krogh. Translation: Kajsa Dahlberg.

named Mr. Skov-Pedersen, on a piece of paper accompanying the tape. By way of typed and handwritten notes, this piece of paper documents at least part of the archiving process that the tape was subject to. Mr. Skov-Pedersen, a staff member of DR's School Radio, describes the significance and placement of the tape; it appears that if the sound quality is not good enough (for School Radio, it seems), the tape should be handed over to "the sound archive for background sound" or the folklore department. Whether or not the sound quality was indeed good enough, the tape eventually ended up in the old sound archive.

The tape and sound numbers of the three tapes described above indicate that they have been subject to a process of archiving. However, judging from the lack of consistency between the numbers, they do not appear to have been part of the same subdivision of the DR Archive. Furthermore, there is, to my knowledge, no longer a folklore department at DR—so a plausible theory might be that this bag of old tapes contains not only the old sound archive, but also tapes from what once was the folklore department. In any case, the registers of these tapes, whether background sounds or folklore, are lost, and the tapes appear at some time to have slipped through the cracks of the DR Archive—perhaps when the reel-to-reel tapes were replaced by a new storage media. This slippage is what caught Dahlberg's attention, because in a certain sense, these tapes allow her to accomplish what she was unable to do in the case of the common voices. She can in fact salvage these old tapes from collective amnesia by disclosing their narratives through translation—she even, at some point, considered re-archiving them in the DR Archive.[81] Dahlberg commenced with the work of transcribing, translating, and photographing the tapes, but as she notes the task was both complicated and time-consuming; moreover, her efforts remained closely entangled with the DR Archive and did not open up for a broader discussion. That is to say, Dahlberg's engagement with the DR Archive, unlike that of the archivist's, derives not only out of concern for the archive; what she is ultimately looking for is some archival thing that lends itself to complication beyond the confines and logics of the DR Archive. So the kind of concern that we can ascribe to Dahlberg may begin in the archive, but it does not end there. Or, put differently, her concern is ultimately dependent on the archival material in question being able to hold its ground beyond the DR Archive—that its meaning is not too intricately entangled in an inherent archival logic.

[81] Dahlberg does not describe this incentive in her account, but she did entertain this possibility for a little while.

Dahlberg therefore eventually abandoned the idea of working with the old reel-to-reel tape sound archive—at least with regard to the commission[82]—and resorted instead to working with one particular program from the DR Archive. She had very specific stipulations with regard to this program and distributed the following message among LARM researchers and DR archivists:

> I am looking for an older program about a workplace. It is important to me that it is not a program that looks back on to a history, but rather a socially-engaged program where workers talk about their working conditions. I imagine that such a program might come from the 60s, for example. My idea is to re-make the same program today in order to compare the notion of work over time, so it needs to be a workplace that still exists in some shape or form today.[83]

Dahlberg found exactly what she was looking for. The program "Workplace 70" ("Arbejdsplads 70"), a 72-minute feature from 1970, is based on a roundtable discussion on working conditions among workers and management at Haustrup's Factories in Odense, Denmark. The factory still exists today under the name Glud & Marstrand, but was unfortunately unwilling to collaborate with Dahlberg on a remake of the original program. Instead of returning to the DR Archive to find another program, Dahlberg's research into the history of Haustrup's Factories had, however, unearthed a new collaborator: the consultancy Dacapo, which specialises in working conditions and was co-founded by a former employee of Haustrup's Factories. Rather than undertaking a present-day remake of the radio program, Dahlberg gathered together a group of people—Dacapo representatives and actors as well as cultural workers—for a new roundtable discussion and rehearsal of scenarios based on "Workplace 70."

I will flesh out this collaboration as well as Dahlberg's ensuing artwork in Chapter 2, and here just point out that this gathering that Dahlberg initiated corresponds with Latour's description of our engagement with matters-of-concern. It is by coming together that we can begin to identify and consider the matters in question, and Dahlberg's roundtable discussion

[82] Dahlberg showed photographs of some of these old tapes alongside translations of the meta-data accompanying the tapes and the lyrics of the recorded song as part of a solo exhibition at Parra & Romero Gallery in Madrid, Spain, June 21 through July 28, 2012. As a work-in-progress, photographs and texts were presented as modest printouts scattered on the walls throughout the exhibition spaces. See http://www.parra-romero.com/exposiciones/kajcha_012/kajcha.html (accessed November 28, 2014).

[83] My translation, the original Swedish text reads as follows: "Jag letar efter ett äldre program om en arbetsplats. Det är viktigt för mig att det inte är ett program som ser tillbaka på en historia, utan att det är en socialt engagerat program där arbetare själva pratar om sina arbetsförhållanden. Jag tänker mig att det bör finnas från 60-talet till exempel. Min idé är att göra om samma program idag, för att få en jämförelse mellan synen på arbete över tid, så det behöver också vara en arbetsplats som finns kvar i någon form i dag." Kajsa Dahlberg to Trine Friis Sørensen, "En arbejdsplads i Danmark," [A Workplace in Denmark], e-mail, September 27, 2012.

is precisely such an inquisitive get-together. Dahlberg does not aspire to resolve the issue at hand or push to reach an agreement, rather, she convenes a meeting where the participants debate, rehearse, disagree, and complicate issues from the radio program from very different perspectives. "Workplace 70" may have been the initial matter of concern—it is the thing that prompted the meeting in the first place—but the roundtable proceedings populate this concern; the participants condition and negotiate the matters in question, making them more heterogeneous and more complex. Latour's notion of matters of concern is, in other words, a useful, almost exemplary, model when it comes to Dahlberg's engagement with the DR Archive. Turning to Olsson, things become a great deal more complicated.

Terms of Engagement

On November 5, 2012, Olsson visited the reel-to-reel tape archive in the new DR complex in Ørestad,[84] Copenhagen with a photographer. The purpose of the visit was to shoot the press photograph for Olsson's upcoming performance tour, *DR P3. 1963-2013. 50 Years of Danish State Authorised Pop Radio,* which would present his work with the DR Archive. In the photograph taken that day, Olsson poses in his regular performance attire, black suit and tie, facing the viewer, holding a Sennheiser MD-21 microphone in his right hand and with his back to shelves of reel-to-reel tapes, as if ready to begin a performance.[85] An archive, of course, is an unusual performance stage; things do not usually enter into an archive until after the fact. Therefore, Olsson's presence in the DR Archive is untimely, premature—as if trying to archive something ahead of time. On the other hand, the backdrop also effectively generates a particular set of expectations; we are led to believe that past radio programs will be part of the performance. Or should we perhaps read something into the fact that Olsson has turned his back to the reel-to-reel tapes? That he, although occupying a space dedicated to the past, could appear to be uninterested in its institutionalised traces? The photograph, it would seem, both establishes and destabilises Olsson's relationship with the DR Archive.

[84] Today, the DR Archive is divided between two locations: the Remote Archive is located in the Copenhagen suburb of Søborg, and what was formerly known as the Voice Archive is now located in the new DR complex in Ørestad.

[85] Olsson, however, does not use the Sennheiser MD-21 microphone for performances because of its omni-directional focus; rather, he uses it for interviews and when making performances for video. He, however, chose the Sennheiser MD-21 for the photo shoot because of its iconic design, and the fact that the DR radio host and DJ Jørgen de Mylius used it when he conducted interviews outside the studio. The Sennheiser MD-21 was DR's standard interview microphone for many years, but today the microphone is on display in a glass case at DR along with other defunct sound equipment.

1.4: Press photograph, Olof Olsson, *DR P3. 1963-2013. 50 Years of Danish State Authorised Radio.* November 2012. Photo: Christopher Sand-Iversen.

As it turned out, the encounter between Olsson and the DR Archive captured in the press photograph performatively prefigures his actual engagement with it. While initial agreements had been made with the DR Sales Department, the conditions of use and copyright fees became exceedingly complicated as the premiere of Olsson's performance drew near. Olsson later summed up the controversy by stating that the DR Sales Department gave him neither a definitive 'yes' or 'no' with regard to permitting the use of excerpts from the DR Archive in his performance.[86] Due to this uncertainty, Olsson abandoned the possibility of using any archival material in his performance just a week before the premiere—thereby warranting his back-turned posture in the press photograph. As a consequence, what I intend to do here—to probe into Olsson's engagement with the DR Archive—would seem to be a difficult undertaking, because what indeed can be said to constitute his engagement with that archive? One option, of course, would be to ruminate on Olsson's visits to the Remote Archive in Søborg as well as the DR Archive in Ørestad in May 2012, where he was introduced to the history of the DR Archive by Lund. I could scrutinise the extensive e-mail correspondence between Olsson and myself, supplemented by e-mails from Lund and DR journalist Susanna Sommer[87] from May 2012, when Olsson accepted the commission, until the premiere of his ensuing performance in January 2013. These e-mails might be able to shed light on Olsson's research process.

However, I find myself drawn to the press photograph of Olsson. In lieu of sifting through a bulk of e-mails trying to pick out the significant material, continuously negotiating with myself where to draw the ethical line of such an undertaking, the press photograph puts an end to any such worries by being decidedly public. More importantly, as I will argue on the following pages, the press photograph not only complicates the temporality of the archive, it is also an indication of what is to come—and it is not quite the kind of projection of a future event that we expect from a press photograph. The examination will also lead me to interrogate the reasonableness of insisting on the fact that Olsson engages with the DR Archive even by turning his back to it.

[86] Olof Olsson, *P3 Script 3 Esbjerg* (unpublished, 2013), 23.
[87] Susanna Sommer assisted with research on funky voices in the DR Archive.

Temporalities on the Loose

What the press photograph does first of all is that it places Olsson in the DR Archive. The photograph transposes a moment, an event, into a pictorial fact.[88] It states that it is undeniably so; Olsson was *there* in the DR Archive. This might seem like a banal observation considering that he had already been given access to the DR Archive in May 2012 on account of my commission. But in these digitalised times it is no longer necessary to visit an actual, physical archive in order to retrieve something. In fact, as mentioned earlier, in order to listen to recordings from the DR Archive one has to consult the digital interface LARM.fm, which effectively and exclusively makes the archive audible beyond its physical confines. So why visit this mute, analogue archive at all? In Olsson's case, we already know that, strictly speaking, he had no archival business in the archive that day; he neither searched for specific tapes nor browsed through the shelves, in fact, the archive didn't have to *be* an archive, it only had to look like one. The archive was a set piece, an evocative scenography, in Olsson's staging of the press photograph.

The press photograph also displays a certain nostalgia for past technology. Although still in production today, the iconic Sennheiser MD-21 microphone dates back to 1953, and reel-to-reel tapes have been piling up at DR since WW2.[89] In fact, while the photograph is of course an imprint of a particular moment in 2012, there is nothing in the photograph that ultimately ties the depicted situation to 2012.[90] Olsson's classic, timeless suit could just as well have been made 50 years ago, and the grey-scaled photograph gives the scenario an altogether antiquated look and atmosphere. So, if we look at the photograph without any prior knowledge—as most people will have experienced it in newspapers or online—it opens up a temporal continuum. Rather than merely a time travelling device, a memory aid, that can bring us back to a past moment—as curator and art critic Okwui Enwezor has characterised the photograph[91]—this particular photograph virtually extends that moment, making the present the past and the past the present.

The timelessness exuded by the photograph would seem to be contrasted by the temporality of the archive. The past may be present in the archive by way of thousands of audio recordings, but it is always a very specific past. The archive works to link every single

[88] Enwezor, *Archive Fever: Uses of the Document in Contemporary Art*, 12.
[89] Despite digitalisation, DR does not dispose of the tapes.
[90] A trained eye may, however, be able to recognise the blurred marks on some of the reel-to-reel tape cassettes as the letter D for digitalised, which indicate that the photograph is of a more recent date.
[91] Enwezor, *Archive Fever: Uses of the Document in Contemporary Art*, 13.

trace of the past to its origin, to commemorate its origin. In an archive, it is vital that we know when and where something originated. So the timelessness of Olsson's press photograph is certainly out of place, and by addressing a future event (rather than a past one) it further unhinges the temporality of the archive. And now that we are on the subject of time, let me expand just a little more on the temporal regime of the archive, because in an archive time is never one's own. It is always under the jurisdiction of someone or something else: the archivist, the opening hours, the archival technologies, and— inevitably—the past. Digitalisation may have cracked open the door to the analogue archive, but once inside a whole set of temporal challenges arises.[92]

To sum up, it would seem that Olsson's press photograph introduces an altogether disjointed and unruly temporality. His getup and posture—as if ready to begin a performance—appear premature in an archive where things only end up after the fact, and to that we can add the timelessness of the motif and the inherent futurity of a press photograph. Contrast this with the rigorous temporality of the analogue archive where everything is kept in check, the past as well as our interaction with the archive, and we have a veritable conflict of temporalities. As a press photograph, the image may establish a set of expectations about a future event, but it is also a premonition. It alerts us to difficulties ahead. The press photograph, in other words, already spells trouble.

Tough Love

Now, I do not want to go into too much detail about the trouble that indeed presented itself with regard to Olsson's use of material from the DR Archive, but, as would be expected, this institutional archive hinges on numerous copyright regulations and they were, unsurprisingly, the nucleus of the dispute. Briefly put, there is a principal distinction between streaming audio files via LARM.fm—a privilege offered to researchers and students on account of an agreement negotiated by LARM—and that of extracting a copy of an audio file from the archive. The latter exceeds the terms of LARM's agreement with DR and is handled by the DR Sales Department. As Olsson's intention was to play back audio clips as part of his performance, streaming from LARM.fm would not suffice; he needed to have the actual audio clips. Hence, having to deal with the DR Sales Department, a whole new set of regulations came into play. The DR Sales Department distinguishes categorically between the

[92] The digital archive of course partly overwrites the time regulations enacted by the physical archive; around-the-clock online access overturns opening hours and the role of the archivist is in some respects replaced by the online search engine. But the past still reigns supreme.

use of their material for teaching and research purposes on the one hand, and commercial use, which comprises any other possible use, on the other.[93] Like students and researchers, Olsson was granted access to LARM.fm, but his plans to present his performance at art institutions rendered it, in the DR Sales Department's perception, commercial use.[94] LARM was in fact ready to cover the copyright fee,[95] but before we came to that Olsson announced that he would refrain from using any recordings from the DR Archive. With the premiere just a week away, he needed to prepare his performance without the distractions and unease of ongoing copyright negotiations.

As I hinted at earlier, the fact that Olsson refrains from using any material from the DR Archive could indeed have dire consequences for my research project, as his choice raises the question of how he can be said to engage with the DR Archive at all. It is, after all, the principal stipulation of the commission to engage with the DR Archive and produce an artwork in relation to it. Now, the short answer to this question would be: he *is* engaging with the DR Archive by refusing to use any archival material and putting an end to the bureaucratic proceedings. But let me expand a little on this answer. If we start with the turn of phrase that I have used rather casually up until now: to engage with the DR Archive, it turns out that the meaning I am going for—something along the lines of establishing a meaningful connection with the DR Archive—is not the only one. To engage with something also means to enter into conflict or combat with this something—in this case an archive. Now, I did not speak in English with either Olsson or Dahlberg,[96] and there is no turn of phrase in Danish or Swedish that conveys corresponding meanings, so this conflictual implication is not something that has germinated in our conversations. Instead, the connotation came to me during the process of writing this thesis, as a result perhaps of the deficiency in comprehension that must always be navigated when communicating in a foreign language. I do not want to overstate the significance of this slippage but simply assert

[93] According to DR's webpage, the law requires them to operate commercially in a way that does not distort competition when it comes to the sales of archival material. See http://www.dr.dk/Salg/Arkivsalg/Professionel_brug/20100825122055.htm (accessed January 17, 2015).

[94] Despite the fact that there was no entrance fee throughout the performance tour, and that financial support from The Danish Arts Council and LARM only covered expenses and Olsson's fee, the DR Sales Department did not budge an inch.

[95] The fee is usually calculated per minute and multiplied by the number of times the clip is used. There are, however, often other factors to take into consideration, so in most cases the DR Sales Department makes specific calculations. This would also have been the case if Dahlberg had chosen to include audio clips from "Workplace 70" in her video.

[96] The only exception is the reflections that Dahlberg agreed to produce about her process with the DR Archive. I suggested doing it in English because my thesis would be written in English, and Dahlberg had no problem with that.

that Olsson's dispute with the DR Sales Department and his eventual withdrawal from the DR Archive does indeed qualify as an engagement.

Another mainstay that supports the claim that Olsson did indeed engage with the DR Archive is the simple fact that my commission designated his engagement. That is, his realisation of the commission is conditioned by an engagement with the DR Archive, no matter whether he actively pursued such engagement or refrained from it. Either way, his process and ensuing artwork take place in relation to the DR Archive, and just as an engagement with the archive generates insights into the DR Archive and the artistic practice in question, the decision *not* to work with the DR Archive also provides grounds for inquiry. We might, as I have done above, ask about the reason for this circumvention and its implications. We could also ask what he did instead and how does that elicit and complicate the notion of the archive? This question is the primary concern of Chapter 3 in which I elaborate extensively on Olsson's ensuing performance and how it addresses the archive, but let me make one thing clear here: withdrawing from the DR Archive does not mean that Olsson did not include radio or archival matter in his performance. In fact, he spoke a great deal about radio—he just did not rely on the DR Archive. Instead he compiled a heterogeneous assortment of historical objects and documents from outside the institutional archive and produced a profoundly unforeseeable account of radio history. In doing so he employed what I earlier termed an archival mode of operation by searching, selecting, and compiling a rather motley collection of historical fragments.

A final question to wrap up this segment on Olsson's engagement with the DR Archive: In light of the above considerations, can we still consider the DR Archive something that Olsson truly concerns himself with? Is turning one's back on the archive not a peculiar way to show concern? That is one way to look at it, but we could also consider Olsson's circumvention of the DR Archive as an act of tough love—that he is in fact deeply concerned about the DR Archive's current state of affairs, but has acknowledged that he must take a step back in order to genuinely address this matter of concern.

Entertaining Uncertainty

There are a lot of beginnings at work in this chapter: the artists' beginnings in the DR Archive as well as the plethora of possible beginnings that arise when we try to determine the beginning, the origin, of the DR Archive. These are evidently quite different beginnings. There is the difficulty of getting started that Dahlberg and Olsson face; where to begin when

charged to engage with such a vast accumulation of material? And it is not even just a matter of getting started; in order to produce an artwork (or write a thesis), we have to search for the right beginning, we might even have to begin several times over to get it right—or start somewhere else entirely. With an archive the beginning is already in the past, and as the futile search for the beginnings of the Tape Archive and the Voice Archive has made abundantly clear, we no longer have access to this initial moment of inscription. In fact, we cannot even put our finger on what constitutes such a beginning. Despite such difficulties we still pursue these beginnings; the artists seek out ways to get started, and I try to read something into these initial manoeuvres, supposing or, more precisely perhaps, presupposing that there is something there, some clue or explanation as to the meaning of it all. In other words, it would seem that this pursuit of beginnings comes down to a desire to know, to understand—and this goes both for the search for the beginning(s) of the DR Archive as well as for my examination of Dahlberg and Olsson's beginnings. If only we can figure out how it all started, we might just finally get it. Or so we might think.

Beginnings are difficult—not even Derrida begins at the beginning when he writes about the archive; he begins with the word 'archive'.[97] I begin with something altogether less certain, with nothing more than an inkling about the DR Archive, a hunch that there may be grounds for concern. Aside from the commissions, which both the artists and I are subject to, I argue that we also approach the DR Archive for another reason: because the archive gives us reason to be concerned. The archive, as Dahlberg notes, would seem to promise us access to past events, to an understanding of history and hence ourselves, but as it turns out the archival things are not readily decipherable. They do not add up. Some we cannot locate, others are decidedly out of order, and in Olsson's case they simply become inaccessible due to copyright restraints. So much for the proclaimed accessibility of the DR Archive—or to be exact, the DR Archive may appear accessible but it defies designation, we cannot pin it down. What we have before us, then, is something we have to approach in an altogether more solicitous manner, something that does not produce obvious, straightforward answers but keeps us guessing. We have to find ways to entertain this uncertainty; Dahlberg proceeds by rounding up a group of interlocutors as Latour suggests, and Olsson walks away from the whole thing—hinting to us that his real concern is not the DR Archive, but how the past is made available to us.

[97] Derrida, *Archive Fever*, 1.

2. Time and Time Again: The Politics of Repetition in Kajsa Dahlberg's Exhibition *This Time It's Political*

A couple of days after the opening of Kajsa Dahlberg's exhibition, *This Time It's Political*, which I curated at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Roskilde, Denmark,[98] a friend of mine, who had not yet seen the exhibition, told me that he did not care much for the exhibition title. That is, it didn't say very much, he argued, because all art is political either by explicitly attempting—perhaps successfully—to raise political issues in the exhibition space, or by not being political and hence by default sustaining and supporting the bourgeois taste and status quo. The title, *This Time It's Political,* is hence stating the obvious and inevitable: all exhibitions are always already political. Now, while the title of the exhibition might be redundant to my friend, I would argue that it accomplishes a little more than just confirming the status quo. By calling attention to *this time*, the exhibition implies that something has preceded it; there has been a *before*, and in effect a temporality is instated. There is a certain repetition at work, but this repetition is not identical with its former occurrence, because it is only *this time* that it is political. As this chapter will elucidate, this iterability is key to Dahlberg's engagement with the archive.

On that note, let me briefly specify what I mean when I speak about the archive in the context of Dahlberg's exhibition, because it is not merely constituted by the DR Archive, which provides the basis of the new video work, "Fifty Minutes in Half an Hour,"[99] from 2013. The remaining three works of the exhibition constitute minor, informal archives collected and organised by Dahlberg: A handful of photographs of abandoned industrial buildings in the work "Industrial Building 1–6" from 2013, a collection of postcards sent from Jerusalem to Sweden between 1910-1999 in the work "No unease can be noticed, all are happy and friendly" from 2010, and annotations made by readers of the Swedish translation of Virginia Woolf's essay, *A Room of One's Own,* in the work "A Room of One's Own / A

[98] The exhibition was on display from February 2 through April 7, 2013.
[99] Kajsa Dahlberg, "Fifty Minutes in Half an Hour," Video 16:9, 2013. The video is available online at https://vimeo.com/114759987, password: Fiftyminutes

Thousand Libraries" from 2006, all make up popular archives in their own right. "Fifty Minutes in Half an Hour"—the video work that Dahlberg produced on account of my commission to engage with the DR Archive and produce an artwork in relation to it—is, in other words, shown alongside three additional works of hers that employ a different notion of the archive. In this chapter, I will conduct a reading of all four of them with particular attention to their archival demeanour.

As I propose in this chapter, the exhibition gives rise to two distinct modes with regard to the archive: one that deactivates and one that assembles, or modes of inoperability and operability. By way of repetition, "Fifty Minutes in Half an Hour" liberates a number of gestures that otherwise have become impossible to use, and "A Room of One's / A Thousand Libraries," in particular, accumulates collective agency through its archival gesture. Characteristic of both of these modes is that they do not linger with the initial inscriptions; we are—as the title of the exhibition suggests—dealing with a different time, *this time*, in which the material is repeated, repurposed, and re-inscribed by the works. In what follows, I will develop these engagements with the archive; first and most extensively through the newly produced work, "Fifty Minutes in Half an Hour", which is the primary concern of this chapter. I will subsequently undertake similar, albeit shorter interrogations, of the additional three works of the exhibition. At the end of the chapter, I will again turn to the notion of the political in order to tease out the politics of a return in the context of the exhibition. But before all of this, I would like to briefly entertain the possible meanings invested in the title of the exhibition, because it already sets the tone.

This Time it's Political has a familiar ring. Behind the word *political* we recognise an echo of *personal*. We know the phrase, "This time it's personal," from movies; when it is muttered by the protagonist we know that the moment of truth really has arrived. The association between the political and the personal alerts us to an expression that flourished in feminist circles at the end of the 1960s and through the 1970s: "The personal is political."[100] The expression summed up a widespread feeling that no sharp distinction could be made between the personal life of the individual and general political rights. All those things that take place within the four walls of a home and not least what concerns the female body are

[100] The expression first appeared as the title of an essay by Carol Hanisch in the publication *Notes from the Second Year: Women's Liberation*, published in 1970. According to Hanisch, it was, however, the editors of the volume, Shulamith Firestone and Anne Koedt, who came up with the title for her essay, see Carol Hanisch, “Introduction,” Carol Hanisch, 2006, http://www.carolhanisch.org/CHwritings /PIP.html, (accessed November 11, 2013).

also political issues.[101] The urgency of the expression would seem to be reinforced by the wording of the exhibition title—not only by association to 'moments of truth' but also as a return. It is only *this* time that this something has become political.

So, the title points to several understandings of the political; the political as having to do with power relations and feminist issues, and as something that is tied up with repetition, or even produced by repetition. And there might be even more implications at work, because while the title obviously is describing something, it is also performatively inscribing the political. *This time* becomes political because Dahlberg says so. This *this*, however, also points us to a specific time, *this time*, and its meaning is hence conditional on the context of its use. But despite the present tense of the title, *this time* can also diffuse our sense of temporality; it might address the instant of the exhibition—a certain (extended) now—but it could also be uttered in anticipation of a future to come, as a pledge or a warning. The title of Dahlberg's exhibition, in other words, already stirs up a number of political and temporal departures before we even set foot in the exhibition.

A Walk-through

Let me start out by describing the basics of the exhibition and the spaces it occupied at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Roskilde.[102] The museum resides in the main building of a four-winged baroque complex[103] from 1736 adjacent to Roskilde Cathedral; hence, the building is listed and the partition of the galleries is fixed. Dahlberg's exhibition spanned the museum's four ground-level galleries, and the architecture was indeed the overriding factor when we were considering the distribution of the artworks in the spaces. There were, quite frankly, not a lot of choices to consider; the architecture more or less dictated the placement of the artworks. With two larger galleries of around 35 square metres—one with windows and one without—and the additional two galleries of 25 and 15 square metres, it was an easy decision to place the many vitrines of "No unease can be noticed, all are happy and friendly"

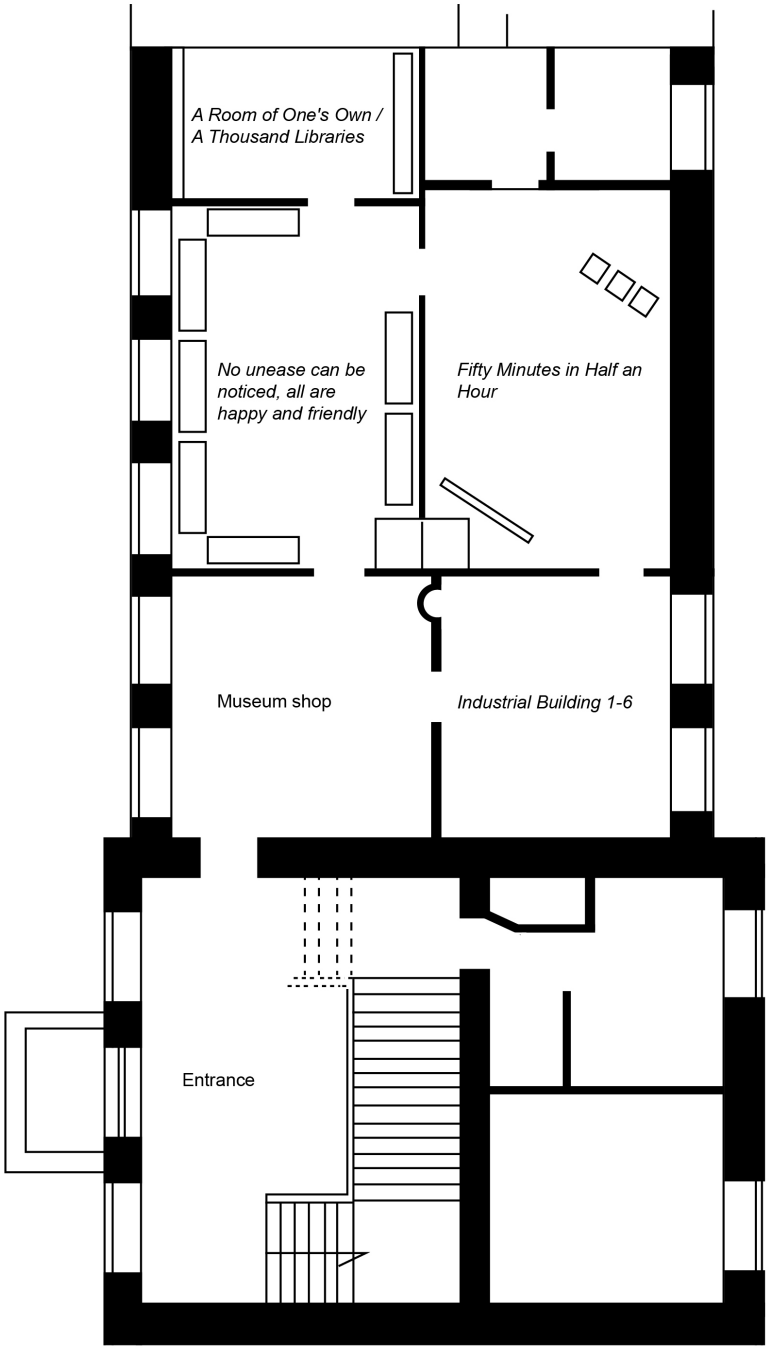
[101] Carol Hanisch, "The Personal Is Political," in *Notes From the Second Year: Women's Liberation*, ed. Shulamith Firestone and Anne Koedt (New York: Radical Feminism, 1970), 76–78.
[102] For further information, see http://samtidskunst.dk/en/about (accessed December 3, 2014).
[103] The complex is called The Royal Palace, and was initially built to serve as lodgings for the king when passing through Roskilde or attending ceremonies at Roskilde Cathedral. It was built using mainly recycled materials from the dilapidated bishop's palace that had been torn down in 1733 to make room for The Royal Palace, and the construction was furthermore on a tight budget. Apparently, the king, Christian VI, was quite disappointed by the building when it was finished in 1736. Between 1835 and 1848, the palace served as a meeting place for The Advisory Estates of the Realm of the Islands. This assembly, although merely advisory, was a significant precursor to the Danish Constitution, which was introduced in 1849. Lotte Tang, *The Royal Palace in Roskilde* (Roskilde: The Palace Collections, 1981), 1-8.

in the large gallery next to the museum shop facing the courtyard, and the new video work, "Fifty Minutes in Half an Hour," in the large adjacent gallery without windows. Here the video was projected onto a screen supported by a visible wooden construction, positioned at an angle from the wall in order to make use of the full diagonal stretch of the space. Chairs for viewers were placed at the opposite diagonal corner to enable the best possible viewing experience. The relative modesty of the size of the galleries also influenced the installation of "No unease can be noticed, all are happy and friendly," which is usually made up of 10 vitrines; here we reduced the number to 7, which lined the walls of the gallery. Approximately 50 copies of Dahlberg's book, "A Room of One's / A Thousand Libraries," were installed in the smallest of the four galleries; most of the books were placed on a long shelf spanning the width of the room, and a couple of books were placed on a little bench as reading copies. The series of framed works, "Industrial Building 1–6," was installed in the remaining gallery, which is also the last space one encounters when moving clockwise through the exhibition.

The galleries of The Museum of Contemporary Art in Roskilde are not perfect white cubes. The building was not made for exhibitions, but for living (albeit rather refined living),[104] and was only turned into a museum in 1991. To that end, the galleries have an air of liveability, of homeliness and intimacy. There are foot panels and door casings, windows and window sills, ceiling rosettes, water pipes, electrical cables, and radiators fitted under the windows; a chimney ruins the perfect rectangles of the two large galleries, and the wooden, herringbone parquet creaks here and there, if I remember correctly. All of this constitutes a congenial setting for Dahlberg's four works. All except the video are orderly and condensed in their largely white appearances—white books, white shelf, white bench, white frames—the immaculate white vitrines of "No unease can be noticed, all are happy and friendly" particularly benefit from the discreet mumbling of the architecture.

When walking clockwise through the galleries, "No unease can be noticed, all are happy and friendly" is the first work that we encounter, with the doorway to "A Room of One's / A Thousand Libraries" up ahead—a possible next stop in a stroll through the exhibition, unless of course the sound of the video in the space to the right proves too enticing to ignore any longer. I would like to begin my reading of the four works of

[104] Except for its years housing the assembly of the Estates of the Realm, the main building has primarily been used as a residence. Other than a number of kings in transit, it was also the temporary home of painter Vilhelm Melbye and his wife, and just after that author and painter Holger Drachman and his family. For many years, the chancellor of the diocese of Zealand resided in the building, and an army colonel lived there for 10 years, before the building, in 1923, once again became the bishop's residence. Tang, *The Royal Palace in Roskilde,* 6-8.



2.1: Ground floor plan, The Museum of Contemporary Art, Roskilde.

Dahlberg's exhibition in this dimly lit room of "Fifty Minutes in Half an Hour," and then continue clockwise through the exhibition, lingering first with "Industrial Building 1–6," stepping through the museum shop and re-entering the exhibition between the vitrines of "No unease can be noticed, all are happy and friendly," before finally arriving at "A Room of One's / A Thousand Libraries."

On the Clock

Time is truly out of joint in Dahlberg's video work "Fifty Minutes in Half an Hour." The title of course already alerts us to this fact, and the video plays out exactly that temporal incongruity. It opens with a white digital clock on a black background counting down from 6:27 minutes while an audio track of a discussion plays back. But as the discussion ends and the clock reaches 0:00, it doesn't stop. Instead the clock begins to count up the passing seconds, and then fades to video imagery and sound. During the remainder of the 50-minute video, the counting clock returns 6 times, seemingly documenting the temporal progress of the video that works its way towards half an hour. Just before the end of the video, the clock returns one last time and counts up the last 15 seconds before the half hour is reached and the video fades to black and ends. The video is literally on the clock, but it is an unreliable clock. It structures the video by squeezing 50 minutes into half an hour and thus manipulates our perception of time. The video is also metaphorically on the clock, that is, its subject matter is work, and time is of the essence.

"Fifty Minutes in Half an Hour" is based on the radio program "Workplace 70" (Arbejdsplads 70), a 72-minute feature from 1970 that Dahlberg found in the DR Archive. "Workplace 70" revolves around a round table discussion on working conditions among workers and management at Haustrup's Factories in Odense, Denmark.[105] From the radio program, Dahlberg has extracted and developed four scenarios that in various ways are concerned with the negotiation of time within the context of work. One scenario engages with the UMS piecework system, which was introduced into industry in the 1960s. UMS marked a radical shift in attitudes towards manual work by focusing specifically on the efficiency of

[105] The company was founded as a family-run business in 1914 and has since been through a number of mergers, buy-ups, and transformations that broadly reflect the globalisation process of recent decades. Today, an international company owns the factory, and manufacturing has been outsourced to China, South Korea, and Central America.

2.2: Kajsa Dahlberg, “Fifty Minutes in Half an Hour,” 2013. Video, 50 minutes, 16:9. Installation view. Courtesy of the artist. Photo: Maria Laub.

the worker's motions.[106] The second scenario pursues the challenges of industrial automation, while the third focuses on the globalisation of labour, involving the outsourcing of manufacturing processes to countries with lower labour costs. The fourth scenario is concerned with the erosion of the boundaries between work and leisure.

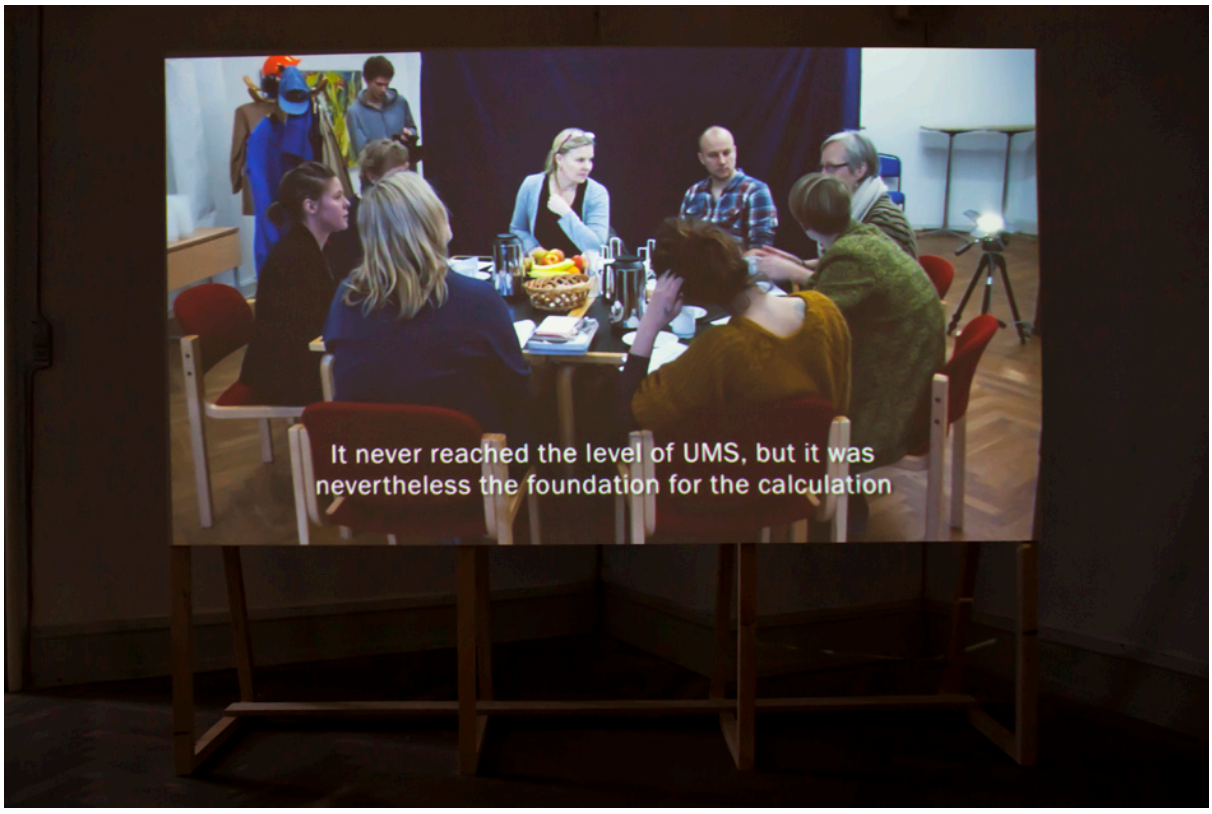
To produce the video, Dahlberg collaborated with the consultancy Dacapo, which was founded in Odense in 1995 by a former employee of Haustrup's Factories, Lone Thellesen. Drawing on theatre director, author and politician Augusto Boal's Theatre of the Oppressed,[107] Thellesen had already, as a consultant of occupational health service at Haustrup's Factories between 1985-1995, started using theatre strategies for the improvement of working conditions. These experiences informed the establishment of Dacapo, which

[106] UMS is short for Universal Maintenance Standards, which is a specific application of the MTM system, that is Methods-Time Measurement. The notion of setting optimum times for the completion of a worker's tasks was also fundamental to Taylorism.

[107] Experimenting with participatory theatre in the 1950s and 1960s in Rio de Janeiro, Boal established The Theatre of the Oppressed in the early 1970s, and later published a book with the same title. (*The Theatre of the Oppressed,* London: Pluto Press, 1979). At the core of Theatre of the Oppressed is Forum Theatre in which role-playing serves as a vehicle for analyzing power, stimulating public debate and searching for solutions.
The Brecht Forum, “Forum Theater,” Brecht Forum Archive, accessed November 28, 2013, http://brechtforum.org/aboutforum.

today primarily facilitates "processes of renewal and change" for large corporations.[108] What Dacapo offers these corporations are role-playing scenarios specifically designed to address the particular "process of renewal and change" that the corporation faces, and it involves the affected employees in this role-playing along with a couple of professional Dacapo actors. "Fifty Minutes in Half an Hour" was shot at the Dacapo headquarters in Odense, where Thellesen, three Dacapo actors, three cultural workers,[109] and Dahlberg met in early January 2013 to discuss and re-enact the four scenarios extracted from the radio program. The setting was a large conference room with a round table and an impromptu backdrop to indicate a stage and frame the re-enactments.[110]

In the video, the scenarios are rehearsed, that is, partly read and partly improvised by the Dacapo actors, who in turn are interrupted by the other participants; new ideas or takes on the subjects are discussed, and the rehearsals are adjusted and performed again. However, it is only the last scenario that is conducted and structured according to Dacapo's methodology;



2.3: Kajsa Dahlberg, “Fifty Minutes in Half an Hour,” 2013. Installation view. Courtesy of the artist. Photo: Miguel Prados Sánchez.

[108] My translation from Dacapo's Danish website, see Dacapo, “Det Får Du! / Aktuelle Temaer,” Dacapo.as – The Art of Change, accessed February 25, 2014, http://www.dacapo.as/aktuelle-temaer.
[109] The Dacapo actors are Nanna Kaarsberg, Jennie Nielsen, and Rasmus Søndergaard, and the cultural workers are artist Mia Edelgart, dramatist, activist, and dramaturg Gritt Uldall-Jensen and myself.
[110] The camera, however, continuously discloses the 'backstage' and surrounding space.

the other three are more loosely orchestrated and directed by Dahlberg and dramaturg Gritt Uldall-Jensen. What is played out in the video is, in effect, a succession of performative repetitions of the archival radio program, which itself recounts significant moments in the history of work, from piecework systems and the gradual transition to industrial automation, where the worker operates a machine, and on to globalisation, outsourcing and the erosion of boundaries between work and leisure.

The video consists of numerous discursive re-enactments of scenarios extracted from the radio program and additional research, but in the first scenario on the piecework system UMS and the second scenario on industrial automation, re-enactments and oral improvisations are accompanied by rehearsals of repetitive motions alluding to manual work on the assembly line. The first scenario literally goes through the motions of the predetermined motion time system MTM, which is a method used in industry to determine the standard time for a worker's completion of a specific task. Eye movements, leg movements, and walking are actions that have been measured, described and given an ideal standard time unit that workers should be able to meet. Of course, the repetitive motions performed in the scenario are no longer producing anything, no commodities are being made; no profit is gained, in contrast to the work on the assembly line.[111] The purpose is no longer production, but rather the conditions of production. In the video, the camera follows two Dacapo actors as they perform repetitive motions and a third actor reads these descriptions aloud:

> The MTM system is based on the premise that all manual labour can be divided into separate basic movements such as STRETCHING, MOVING, GRABBING, ADJUSTING etc. The timing of these movements is collated on a single data-sheet. One can then analyse the basic movements needed to complete a specific task and assign every movement a predefined temporal value, which is defined by the nature of that specific movement and what conditions it. The temporal unit of the measurement of these small and simple movements is called TMU.
>
> LEG MOVEMENT is the basic movement that takes place when the leg is moved under normal conditions by way of the knee and/or the hip, and when the main purpose is to move the leg. This movement can be made both while seated and while standing. In standing position, the leg movement is made using the hip, and in seated position the knee is normally employed. The term for this leg or lower-leg movement is LM.
>
> WALKING is the basic movement that takes place when the main purpose is to move the body forwards or backwards using one or more steps. WALKING on smooth and level surfaces with no hindrances or burdens takes 14,4 TMU per meter. A temporal value that previously was defined by steps set at 86 cm per step, which is equal to a temporal value of 15,0 TMU per step.

[111] Dahlberg has provided the actors with plastic cups to use in this scenario, but they are mere props, stage objects, to prompt the movements.

> The MTM standard for WALKING based on steps is normally only used for shorter distances and often for moving around, for example moving around a workplace.[112]

What is described here is, in other words, a strict regime of motions prescribing the optimum efficiency of the human body.

Suspension of Action

In his essay "Notes on Gesture", philosopher Giorgio Agamben also concerns himself with motions of the human body. In fact, when it comes to providing a concrete example of what a gesture is, Agamben mentions only one thing, and that is gait. In order to support his opening proclamation—*"By the end of the nineteenth century, the Western bourgeoisie had definitely lost its gestures,*"[113] which is not a matter of disappearance but extreme proliferation, as Sarah Pierce has noted[114]—he first quotes Gilles de la Tourette's description of the human step,[115] and relates it to photographer Eadweard Muybridge's work on capturing human (and animal) movement, for example "Man walking at normal speed". He then turns to Tourette's study of what later came to be known as 'Tourette's syndrome', a syndrome that Agamben describes as "a generalised catastrophe of the sphere of gestures" since "patients can neither start nor complete the simplest of gestures."[116] Agamben finally quotes Jean-Martin Charcot, who described the equivalent of this disorder in the sphere of the gait.[117]

The MTM system, described in the quote above, also provides a description of the human gait; here, however, it is altogether controlled and standardised to meet industry's

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[112] These paragraphs are the English subtitles of Dahlberg's video in which they are read aloud in Danish (9:20-12:15). The paragraphs were, however, originally written in Swedish and published in LKAB-tidningen 2, 1963. Sara Lidman, *Gruva* (Stockholm: Bonnier, 1968), 87–90.

[113] Giorgio Agamben, "Notes on Gesture," in *Means without End: Notes on Politics*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), 48.

[114] Sarah Pierce, "Fragment, Mediality, Gag," in *Little Theatre of Gestures*, ed. Nikola Dietrich and Jacob Fabricius (Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz, 2009), 13.

[115] "While the left leg acts as the fulcrum, the right foot is raised from the ground with a coiling motion that starts at the heel and reaches the tip of the toes, which leave the ground last; the whole leg is now brought forward and the foot touches the ground with the heel. At this very instant, the left foot—having ended its revolution and leaning only on the tip of the toes—leaves the ground; the left leg is brought forward, gets closer to and then passes the right leg, and the left foot touches the ground with the heel, while the right foot ends its own revolution." Agamben, "Notes on Gesture," 49.

[116] Ibid., 51.

[117] "He sets off—with his body bent forward and with his lower limbs rigidly and entirely adhering one to the other—by leaning on the tip of his toes. His feet then begin to slide on the ground somehow, and he proceeds through some sort of swift tremor.... When the patient hurls himself forward in such a way, it seems as if he might fall forward any minute; in any case, it is practically impossible for him to stop all by himself and often he needs to throw himself on an object nearby. He looks like an automaton that is being propelled by a spring: there is nothing in these rigid, jerky, and convulsive movements that resembles the nimbleness of the gait.... Finally, after several attempts, he sets off and —in conformity to the aforementioned mechanism—slides over the ground rather than walking: his legs are rigid, or, at least, they bend over so slightly, while his steps are somehow substituted for as many abrupt tremors." Ibid., 52.

demand for optimal efficiency. This might just constitute another "generalised catastrophe of the sphere of gestures,"[118] but rather than failing miserably in performing any gesture like the person suffering from Tourette's syndrome, the MTM system reduces human motion to mechanised actions that perform specific tasks. And nothing, according to Agamben, "is more misleading for an understanding of gesture [...] than representing [...] a sphere of means addressing a goal (for example, marching seen as a means of moving the body from point A to point B)."[119] The gait is entirely stripped of any gestures; it has lost all naturalness.

Now, in Dahlberg's video, I would argue that these movements become something else. As in Agamben's text, the description of the gait in Dahlberg's video is a quote. It is read again, but the accompanying motions of the actors do not follow the description; they are not acted, synchronised executions of the descriptions. In fact, according to Walter Benjamin—writing about Bertolt Brecht's Epic Theatre—"imitated gestures are worthless unless the point to be made is, precisely, the gestural process of imitation,"[120] which certainly is the case here. The gestures described in the text can no longer occur; what the actors perform are and can only be gestures as they occur today.[121] Furthermore, as I mentioned above, the gestures are not actually producing anything. The motions have been removed from the factory floor, their relation to a goal is undone, and instead they are performed in a conference room as pure mediality. The motions are not, I would argue, means with an end in themselves, which is another misunderstanding of gesture according to Agamben, who uses dance as an example of this. What plays out in the conference room is not performance art; the actors' motions do not have an aesthetic dimension; they are simply performed and then interrupted, time and again, to adjust or change the proceedings.

For example, following an interruption, Thellesen instructs one of the actors how to stand and work correctly on the impromptu assembly line (a table) in order not to strain her back. Thellesen's interruption is not only a correction; it is also a repetition, a gestural citation. She first cites the incorrect working position of the actor and then enacts the correct one (the motions should be performed close to the body), which in turn is cited by the actor as she picks up the performance once again. In other words, Thellesen and the actor cite each other's gestures, they make the gestures citable, as Benjamin terms the actor's *spacing* or

[118] Ibid., 51.
[119] Ibid., 58.
[120] Walter Benjamin, "What Is Epic Theatre? [Second Version]," in *Understanding Brecht* (London; New York: Verso, 1998), 23.
[121] Ibid., 24.

2.4-5: Kajsa Dahlberg, stills from “Fifty Minutes in Half an Hour,” 2013. Courtesy of the artist.

emphasising of gestures in Epic Theatre.[122] Or, in Brecht's phrasing, they show that they are showing.[123] So, while Dahlberg's video pursues the conditions of production, these conditions can only be enacted as imitations through today's gestures, which in turn are rendered citable by Thellesen's interruption. This citability made possible—note the suffix -ability[124]—is not only directed towards what has been but also towards a possible future[125] precisely because of the potentiality, the ability, to be re-cited. For both Benjamin and Agamben, it would seem, the suspension of action harbours a certain potentiality—for Benjamin by way of interruption and citability, and for Agamben as a means without ends, as pure mediality. In the case of Dahlberg's video, however, both their arguments can contribute to our understanding of the inquiry undertaken by the video; in fact, gesture, in Dahlberg's video, becomes pure mediality precisely through a gestural process of imitation and by being rendered citable. So, what is performed in the video is mediation as a process of imitation and re-inscription, of citation and citability, and all the future appearances that it makes possible. What is also made apparent here is the transformative capacity of the iteration when the gesture is emphasised and made visible.

Performing Profanation

Such emancipatory gestures also hinge on Agamben's notion of *profanation*, or to be exact the profanation of the unprofanable. Let me explain: to profane essentially means to return that which was sacred to the free use of man. But with capitalism, which Agamben, like Benjamin, deems a religion, it has become impossible to profane. In the capitalist cult everything is divided from itself into a sphere of consumption or "spectacular exhibition"[126]

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[122] By using *citable* rather than *quotable*, which is how Benjamin's *zitierbar* has been rendered into English, I am following the lead of Samuel Weber, who in his book, *Theatricality as Medium,* argues that to cite like *zitieren* "still carries with it etymological resonances from its Latin root, *citare*, to set in movement." In addition, Weber argues, to cite also means to arrest movement. Samuel Weber, *Theatricality as Medium*, (New York: Fordham University Press, 2004), 45.

[123] Bertolt Brecht, "Showing Has To Be Shown," in *Bertolt Brecht Poems 1913-1956* (London: Methuen, 1979), 341. This *showing off* is also central to Brecht's *Verfremdungseffekt* or alienation effect, which he first described in the essay "Alienation Effect in Chinese Theatre" in 1935. The alienation effect is "a technique of taking the human social incidents to be portrayed and labelling them as something striking, something that calls for explanation, is not to be taken for granted, not just natural," as Brecht describes it in another essay "The Street Scene," from 1938. Bertolt Brecht, "Alienation Effects in Chinese Acting" and "The Street Scene. A Basic Model for an Epic Theatre" in *Brecht on Theatre. The Development of an Aesthetic*, ed. and trans. John Willett (London: Eyre Methuen, 1974), 91-99; 128.

[124] Samuel Weber has dedicated an entire book to *Benjamin's -abilities,* in other words, Benjamin's tendency "...to formulate many of his most significant concepts by nominalising verbs (...) by adding the suffix *-barkeit* (...) or *-ability"* Samuel Weber, *Benjamin's -Abilities* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2008), 4.

[125] Weber, *Theatricality as Medium*, 46.

[126] Giorgio Agamben, "In Praise of Profanation," in *Profanations*, trans. Jeff Fort (New York: Zone Books, 2007), 82.

that renders use impossible. But all is not lost: there are ways of reinstating use; it is possible to free "a behaviour from its genetic inscription within a given sphere,"[127] Agamben argues. He continues: "The freed behaviour still reproduces and mimics the forms of the activity from which it has been emancipated, but, in emptying them of their sense and of any obligatory relationship to an end, it opens them and makes them available for a new use."[128] This, I would argue, is what the actors' iterations of the MTM motions produce in Dahlberg's video.

In the case of the MTM system, what Agamben calls 'genetic inscription' does not adhere to the worker; rather, it is in the DNA of capitalism. As a cost-effective formula, the MTM system imposes the standards of the ideal worker onto every single motion on the factory floor. In effect, the workers become separated from themselves; they become separated from their own motions and are no longer able to use them, that is, to move freely (within the confines of the factory floor, of course). The workers are instead compelled to comply with capitalism's predatory behaviour and perform accordingly. In Dahlberg's video, however, this enforced behaviour that strives for efficiency is substituted by the actors' free and distracted performance of the standardised motions. The motions are no longer directed towards production but put to new use. This new use does not constitute a new end; instead the new use is pure means, a means without end. This emancipation is, however, not a permanent state, because nothing, Agamben reminds us, is "as fragile and precarious as the sphere of pure means."[129] The motions of the actors can briefly undo the separation, but only for as long as the motions are performed. In other words, the actors' free and distracted iterations of the MTM motions profane—and in effect liberate—the standardised movements from being purposeful by only displaying the medium of movement for and by itself.

Conditioning Conditions

I said before that nothing is being produced in Dahlberg's video, which of course is not entirely correct. While the actors' enactments imitate the MTM motions without addressing a goal, there is still work at work and something is being produced. The actors work, Dahlberg works, the cultural workers work, and Thellesen works—all following Dahlberg's lead with regard to the purpose of the gathering: to shed light on different historical and present-day scenarios of work through discussions, enactments, and improvisations. This purpose is

[127] Ibid., 85.
[128] Ibid., 85-86.
[129] Ibid., 87.

already made clear during the opening roundtable conversation in the video, where Dahlberg also explains that footage of these activities will later be edited into a video. But while the purpose undeniably points to a specific outcome, a video, I would argue that what actually takes place during those 50 minutes of video is primarily invested in the subject matters at hand and the interactions between a number of people. Of course, the fact that two cameramen are filming the proceedings is a factor, but few instances were directed or enacted specifically for the camera. In fact, the cameramen continuously had to keep up with what was going on, which makes the footage haphazard at times and gives the video a somewhat coarse texture.

The work at hand is not just concerned with the four scenarios on working conditions from the archival radio program; Dahlberg frames this inquiry in a way that is characteristic of present-day working conditions—especially when dealing with complicated situations—that is, by involving a consultancy as an intermediary. At least, this is a prevalent procedure for employers and workplaces today; when changes have to be implemented—from lay-offs to an improved working climate—a consultancy is hired to do the job. Now, Dahlberg is of course not an employer looking to change her company, but then again, Dacapo is not just any consultancy. As I mentioned earlier, Thellesen has intimate knowledge of Dahlberg's chosen case study, Haustrup's Factories, which supplies the investigation with an advantageous jumping-off point. Dacapo's history and methodology, however, also add an additional layer of complexity to the inquiry. Starting out as a theatre group in 1995, Dacapo became a commercial foundation in 1999 and a private limited company in 2007. Throughout these different incorporations, Dacapo has consistently adapted Boal's participatory theatre strategies as its methodology. Boal developed his strategies in order to fight back against oppression, using role-play to empower participants in their daily lives. Similar to Brecht's Epic Theatre, he sought to dissolve the division between actors and audiences;[130] audience members are urged to intervene in the role-play, even to replace the actors and perform their own ideas. Boal's approach to theatre was, in effect, a rehearsal for social action rooted in a collective analysis of shared problems.[131]

It is safe to say that Dacapo's adaptation—or recuperation, to be exact—of Boal's subversive politics of social action goes against Boal's intentions,[132] and this obvious

[130] Benjamin, “What Is Epic Theatre? [Second Version],” 20.
[131] Brecht Forum, "Augusto Boal & The Theater of the Oppressed", Brecht Forum Archive, accessed July 17, 2004, http://brechtforum.org/abouttop.
[132] In the video, Thellesen openly recounts that Boal was unwilling to talk to Dacapo after they became successful and started working for large corporations. Boal considered it a kind of treason, Thellesen says.

discrepancy is addressed specifically in the opening discussion of the video while the clock counts down. This discussion sets the scene, so to speak, for the remainder of the video by pointing to the conditions of the collaborative work about to take place and the positions of the people involved. In effect, what the video depicts is not merely rehearsals of past and present working conditions; it also addresses and enacts the conditions of the work unfolding in the conference room. In other words, Dahlberg's ambition of coming to terms with a history of work is played out through a present-day state of work in which subversive measures are innocuously co-opted to serve capitalism. This recuperation, of course, also involves a certain kind of iteration. But, in this case, the iteration defuses the socio-political imperative of Boal's strategies, and instead instrumentalises and generalises the method as a generic tool of conflict resolution.

The Clock as Mediality

The advent of modernity brings about a fundamental change in the way we are able to experience time, according to philosopher Henri Lefebvre. Before modernity, time was apprehended within space; it was inscribed in space as we see it in the growth rings of trees, but as the use of clocks and watches proliferated, time vanished from social space.[133] Modernity, that is, capitalist modernity, has made time intelligible to us only through measuring instruments. It follows that time recorded on clocks has become abstracted from lived time, which in turn is shorn of its visibility. There is one exception though, and that is time spent working. Because what the abstraction of time engenders is the subordination of time to space; it becomes possible to spatialise time, to divide it into intervals, to quantify it. Hence, time is subsumed into capitalism: "it can be bought and sold just like any object ('time is money')."[134]

The representation of a ticking clock in Dahlberg's video emphasises exactly that; it is time—and not the task—that industry values. In this respect, the clock in the video is the epitome of Lefebvre's clock-time. However, Dahlberg's clock is far from a rational, time-efficient clock. While it is most certainly isolated from lived time, it is also isolated from clock time. The clock is unable to keep track of time; it even tampers with the clock time. That the unreliable clock constitutes a critique of industry's instrumentalisation of time seems

[133] Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space* (Oxford, OX, UK ; Cambridge, Mass., USA: Blackwell, 1991), 95.
[134] Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, 96.

evident, but Dahlberg does more than that. She is to some extent changing time[135], not by "firing on clock faces to make the day stand still,"[136] but by wresting time from the cult of the clock. The temporal regime is, however, not replaced with another hegemony. Instead, Dahlberg seeks to undo the temporal regime of clock time by pushing it off its hinges. Time is indeed both troubling and troubled in Dahlberg's video, not only as a consequence of the exhaustive instrumentalisation of time that industry undertakes, but also because the video disrupts the clock's relentless repetition of the instant that precedes it.[137]

So, to sum up and clarify, Dahlberg's video rehearses a number of repetitive motifs, most prominently the iteration as a profanation of the unprofanable. The MTM motions are, as I have argued above, profaned and in effect emancipated by the actors' re-enactments, just as the radio program, "Workplace 70," is unlocked from its archival seclusion. Both the MTM motions and the radio program are, however, only momentarily reintroduced into public circulation and use; the radio program remains separated from (any other) use on account of the DR Archive's strict copyright regulations, and the MTM motions must be performed in a free and distracted manner in order to escape their enforced efficiency and purposefulness. In a certain sense, Dacapo's recuperation of Boal's subversive strategies performs the reverse movement—from usability to impossibility of use. By adapting Boal's strategies as generic devices for problem solving in the private and public sector, the strategies are shed of their subversive socio-political potential.[138] In Dahlberg's video, this awkward repurposing of Boal's strategies is addressed, and—under the direction of Dahlberg and Uldall-Jensen—applied less seamlessly to the activities. But they still fundamentally inform Dacapo's practice as well as condition "Fifty Minutes in Half an Hour"—Dahlberg did, after all, knowingly invite Dacapo to be part of her inquiry.

For this reason, Dahlberg's engagement with the DR Archive, specifically the radio program "Workplace 70" and the history of working conditions that it addresses, comes very close to how Latour advises us to gather around matters of concern. The roundtable discussion that underpins the video triggers an occasion to passionately differ and dispute; the

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[135] Agamben argues that every culture first and foremost is a particular experience of time. "The original task of a genuine revolution, therefore, is never merely to 'change the world', but also - and above all - to 'change time'." Giorgio Agamben, "Time and History. Critique of the Instant and the Continuum," in *Infancy and History: The Destruction of Experience* (London ; New York: Verso, 1993), 91.

[136] Walter Benjamin, "On the Concept of History," in *Walter Benjamin: Selected Writings, Volume 4: 1938-1940*, ed. Michael William Jennings and Howard Eiland (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap, 2004), 395.

[137] Henri Lefebvre and Catherine Régulier, "The Rhythmanalytical Project," in *Rhythmanalysis: Space, Time, and Everyday Life* (London ; New York: Continuum, 2004), 79.

[138] Within the current economy, recuperation, that is, a certain retooling of once-emancipatory or radical practices and images, has almost become a practice onto itself.

thing that brings together this group of legitimate people is also the thing that divides us.[139] Dahlberg's approach, in other words, demonstrates and constitutes the problematic nature of the matter at hand. What we have in front of us is not readily solvable, but by getting together to discuss and rehearse it, we can at least begin to represent this altogether divisive thing. And all the while the clock is ticking, supposedly displaying a temporal regime that is relentlessly repetitive, second after second—like clockwork. But as we come to realise, the work of this particular clock has gone awry. In the video, clock time, which we have come to rely on exclusively in capitalist society, has been liberated from its purposefulness; it can only display its own mediality.

Making Visible

Like an appendix to "Fifty Minutes in Half an Hour", "Industrial Building 1-6" also concerns itself with work and how it has changed over time, but rather than undertaking this inquiry through the conditions of work and the perspective of the worker, "Industrial Building 1-6" focuses on the architectural complexes that harbour these activities, or at least used to. Constructed for large-scale industry in 1847-1940, the 6 industrial buildings depicted in the work have all been abandoned and serve the purposes of an altogether different kind of industry these days, namely, a creative industry. Another significant change is that while these buildings used to be located outside the city limits, they have—over time—been swallowed up by the burgeoning cities; today, some of them even constitute entire neighbourhoods. "Industrial Building 1-6" subtly points to a process of globalisation, which has fundamentally changed industry and in effect the way we live and work. The development is a prevalent, almost trivial fact in parts of the Western world; either industrial production ceases altogether due to lack of competitiveness relative to countries with lower labour and production costs, or the production process is outsourced to these countries. In either case, numerous industrial buildings in urban environments have been repurposed in recent years. "Industrial Building 1–6" documents 6 such cases:

> The Carlsberg Brewery, Copenhagen, 1847–2008. 2008–
> Brandt's Clothing Factory, Odense, 1869–1977. 1983–
> The Brown Meatpacking District, Copenhagen, 1878–1970s. 2005–
> The Template Loft, B&W, Refshaleøen, Copenhagen, 1921–96. 2008–

[139] Latour, “From Realpolitik to Dingpolitik,” 13.

The White Meatpacking District, Copenhagen, 1934–74. 2005–
Zealand's Concrete Factory / KH Concrete / Unicon, Roskilde, 1940–2004. 2006–[140]

Today, the industrial buildings listed above are used as exhibition spaces, creative workshops, studios, cafés, restaurants, and shared offices[141]; there is even an art academy and an art cinema in one of the buildings. Dahlberg has listed all these current functions and businesses by hand underneath photographs of each of the buildings as they appear today. The lists are written on the reverse of multi-hole A4 index tab dividers—the pre-printed lines of the front-page are just traceable through the paper. Using the reverse could indicate a slight defiance of the pre-printed template, but even with the reverse side up (and consequently upside down) the characteristic shape of the index tab divider denotes a certain system and order, or more pointedly, it denotes an archive. Just like the file and the folder, the tab has come to symbolise the collection, organisation, identification, and not least the recollection of information. The iconography and terminology of the tab remain intrinsic to archiving in the digital age—just think of the computer—we even 'keep tabs' when we want to monitor the development of something. So, simply from appearances, Dahlberg would seem to hint to us that "Industrial Building 1–6" is an archive.

To pursue this archival clue, we might ask what is being archived; what is in fact imprinted onto this intrinsically archival substrate? The stuff that Dahlberg singles out and transposes to paper is her immediate present, or to be precise, an aspect of post-industrial work specific to our time. Now, *our time* is of course a rather abstract notion, it might go as far back as 1983 (when the first repurposing began) or just around 10 years back to the mid-00s, when the remaining buildings were put to new use. "Industrial Building 1–6" was, however, produced in 2013 in the month leading up to the exhibition, and during this time the photographs were taken and the lists copied from available registers of tenants. In other words, while the work reflects a decade-long tendency toward the creative take-over of former industrial buildings, Dahlberg makes this point by archiving her immediate present—which to us, of course, is already in the past. The photographs point us to certain places and times; they represent particular moments and events by revealing certain traces of reality as it once was. The photographs are, as Okwui Enwezor has argued,[142] *a priori* archival objects.

[140] In Danish: Carlsberg, Brandts Klædefabrik, Den Brune Kødby, Skabelonloftet, Den Hvide Kødby, Sjællands Betonvarefabrik / KH Beton / Unicon. The first set of years refers to the period in which these industrial buildings were used for their initial purpose. The year followed by an open-ended dash indicates when the creative businesses moved in.
[141] In the Brown and White Meatpacking Districts there still remain a number of meat and food related businesses.
[142] Enwezor, *Archive Fever: Uses of the Document in Contemporary Art*, 12.

2.6-7: Kajsa Dahlberg, “Industrial Building 1-6,” 2013. 6 photographs, paper. Installation view and detail. Courtesy of the artist. Photo: Maria Laub.

Inevitably slightly out of sync with the photographs, Dahlberg's handwritten lists also attest to a specific moment and act of inscription. These were the registered tenants of the buildings when Dahlberg made the lists; today the group of tenants may very well have changed. In turn, what is archived is an inscription of reality in its moment of archivisation.

Now, while the above pins down "Industrial Building 1–6" as a proper archival object, there is a perhaps an even more urgent question, which is, what does this archive make possible? Dahlberg does not merely record imprints of reality, she literally produces them, and this production is simultaneously an act of archivisation.[143] There is a certain sobriety and simplicity to these 6 records; the size of the photographs indicates more of a documentary inclination than an aesthetic ambition. On the other hand, the fact that Dahlberg has chosen to list the tenants by hand gives the work an intimate feeling—as if this really matters to her. There is truly an archival impulse[144] at work here, but what Dahlberg archives is neither obscure nor forgotten; it is a common occurrence in urban environments, but exactly because of this prevalence we don't pay much attention to it. To archive consequently becomes a device for Dahlberg, a device that makes visible and points out what we otherwise wouldn't take any notice of. Inscribed on the intrinsically archival substrates, the traces address their source in reality and make us truly see what we are already looking at.

Collecting and Recollecting

Allow me to take a little detour from my readings of one work after another in Dahlberg's exhibition. Because right here, on the doorstep to "No unease can be noticed, all are happy and friendly," is where most people would begin their visit to *This Time It's Political.* We are, virtually speaking, in the museum shop of The Museum of Contemporary Art, and most people visiting the exhibition begin with "No unease can be noticed, all are happy and friendly," and in turn move clockwise through the exhibition. Few, if any, begin with "Industrial Building 1-6," and proceed counter-clockwise through the remaining galleries, and no one begins where I begin my reading of the works, with "Fifty Minutes in Half an Hour." Or, to be exact, you would, as I described at the beginning of this chapter, have to walk through the gallery displaying "No unease can be noticed, all are happy and friendly" and turn right just before "A Room of One's Own / A Thousand Libraries" in order to get there. In writing, of course, I am not bound by architectural constraints. I can begin wherever

[143] Derrida, *Archive Fever,* 17.
[144] Foster, “An Archival Impulse,” 3-4.

I want—regardless of the order of the artworks or the partition of the spaces. But since the architecture, as I described earlier, so fundamentally conditioned the distribution of the artworks, this bona fide beginning of the exhibition should be recognised on paper as well. So, stepping in between the vitrines of "No unease can be noticed, all are happy and friendly," this is where most people would embark on the exhibition. In this asynchronous chapter, we are, of course, already two artworks into the exhibition.

Like "Industrial Building 1-6", the notion of the trace is also a significant component of "No unease can be noticed, all are happy and friendly" from 2010. The work is based on an archive of approximately 600 postcards sent from Jerusalem to Sweden by tourists and travellers between March 26, 1910 and January 24, 1999. Dahlberg acquired the postcards through second-hand bookshops and stamp collectors in Sweden, and she has sorted and categorised all postcards according to their written content. At The Museum of Contemporary Art, a selection of approximately 250 postcards was displayed chronologically in seven cabinets,[145] beginning with the earliest postcards in the vitrine to the left of the entrance. Gradually moving up through the 20th century, the vitrines line the walls of the gallery displaying a chronological succession of postcards, and describing hereby another clockwise movement in the exhibition. The vitrines are fitted with double glass tops and mirrors mounted at the bottom, enabling the viewer both to read the texts that face upwards, and to see the reflection of the postcard pictures that face downwards. Like "Industrial Building 1–6", the work contains both visual traces of places as well as handwritten inscriptions; here, however, the handwriting is produced by hundreds of people, and Dahlberg has meticulously transcribed the writing in the original Swedish as well as translated it into English. Along with the name of the stamp and the image copyright of each postcard, both the transcribed and translated texts are printed on a white label that overlays the postcard's addressee.

There is nothing very remarkable or surprising about the written content of the postcards: they extend greetings to loved ones, talk about daily life in Jerusalem, the weather, historical monuments, the local cuisine, and the religious activities of the pilgrims—all in all what might be expected of postcards (from Jerusalem). Political events in or around Jerusalem throughout the 89 years—and perhaps especially during the latter half of those years—are rarely mentioned; only once in a while do writers comment on such issues:

[145] Previous installations of the work included 10 vitrines, for example, at Lund Konsthall, Sweden in 2010, and at Manifesta 8 later that same year.

2.8-9: Kajsa Dahlberg, "No unease can be noticed, all are happy and friendly," 2010. Postcards from Jerusalem, 26 March 1910 – 24 January 1999. Installation view and detail. Courtesy of the artist. Photo: Maria Laub.

"Today after church service in Swedish at the eng. church, we stayed home while awaiting the row in the old town to calm down,"[146] or "Life here has of course an unfriendly pulse because of the many races and religions that meet here,"[147] or simply "No unease can be noticed, all are happy and friendly."[148] These few quotes—the last of which is also the title of the work—bear witness to the precarious political situation in the city, but infrequently and in a rather subdued manner. The postcard is, of course, not usually the medium of choice when it comes to political expression and since many of the writers are tourists, it is not so surprising that they refrain from commenting on the political situation. But having once again been reminded of the continued unrest of that region, the general cheerfulness of these postcards comes across as somewhat peculiar. By bringing all these postcards together, Dahlberg maps out a discrete history of the privileged outsider—here enacted by the Swedish leisure traveller—and collates a collective perspective on practices of visiting and constructing places.

The reverse sides of the postcards depict a typical assortment of historical monuments, architectural landmarks, and views of the city, but as already mentioned above, the photographs come to us only as mirror images that we can see—sometimes only glimpse—through the gaps between the postcards. Moreover, the mirrors not only reproduce the postcard images, they also mirror the distance between the postcards—fixed between two panels of glass—and the mirrors below. In other words, the mirror images of the postcard pictures appear to be further away than they actually are. Thus curiously suspended in the cabinets, the photographs would seem to call into question how we are able to access the past. As I have previously described, the photograph archives a trace of a certain place at a certain time to which it refers us back. Archived again, so to speak, in Dahlberg's installation, an additional layer of reference is produced; what we see is a reflection of the postcard images. And these reflections, of course, point back to the postcard images, which again point back to the scenarios captured by the photographs. The brush of vertigo engendered by the mirror images comes from looking down into the abyss of repetition.[149]

In a similar fashion, the handwritten inscriptions by hundreds of postcard writers throughout almost a century has also been repeated and mediated by Dahlberg. Her

[146] Sender's name not mentioned, April 16, 1982.
[147] Dagny and Astrid, September 22, 1983.
[148] Gerda, Gertrud and Gunnar, March 21, 1971.
[149] Derrida speaks about the abyss or *en abyme* of repetition and affirmation. Derrida, *Archive Fever*, 38-99.

archivisation has produced another set of traces that refer back to the handwriting, which in turn refers back to the initial moment of inscription. The transcribed and translated texts are printed on white labels that cover the addressees of the postcards. Dahlberg's archivisation, in other words, also leaves something out. As a medium emblematic of remembrance, the postcard is specific first and foremost to the sender and the addressee, but as the postcard is archived and anonymised in Dahlberg's work, it ceases to be a personal memory aid and becomes instead a public one. Put differently, Dahlberg establishes her archive by anonymising the recipient and hence the postcard; the postcard is shorn of its specific communicative purpose and meaning, and becomes but a gesture devoid of the personal memories it was once capable of evoking.

In "No unease can be noticed, all are happy and friendly" the postcards are archived again into a new configuration that inscribes a new set of traces. Dahlberg's archival gesture is ultimately that of consignation,[150] of gathering together traces in a system that makes public recollection possible, but also *ipso facto* determines how the postcards can operate as memory aids, and in effect how we are able to experience them. We perform our recollection by way of her configuration.

A Thinking in Common

Dahlberg also takes on the role of copyist-cum-archivist in the final work of the exhibition**,** "A Room of One's Own / A Thousand Libraries" from 2006. In this work, Dahlberg has traced all underlinings and marginal notes made by readers of library copies of the Swedish translation of Virginia Woolf's essay *A Room of One's Own* (1929) into one compilation of the book. The work assembles almost 50 years of handwritten inscriptions from the publication of the first Swedish translation, *Ett eget rum,* in 1958 until 2006, when Dahlberg produced her work. As Dahlberg herself has said during an interview, "A Room of One's Own / A Thousand Libraries" came about out of practical necessity, and was not initially conceived as an artwork:

> A few years back I wanted to give the book to a friend, only to find that all the Swedish editions were sold out. It has been a really important book for me, so I was quite astonished by the fact it was no longer possible to purchase it. Instead, I got hold of the book through a library, had it copied, and bound into a hard cover. I liked the look of it, which indicated copy and original at one and the same time. This particular book that I got hold of through a library contained lots of notes, which contributed

[150] Ibid., 3.

> to the fact that I wanted to read it again. I started to collect these notes without actually planning it should later become an artwork.[151]

This did however become the starting point of the work, and Dahlberg eventually borrowed all available copies in Swedish libraries, photocopied all the pages, and hand-traced the handwritten notes and underlinings into one self-published art book in an edition of 1000 copies. The books are hard cover bound like (Swedish) library books, but all white with no print—neither author nor title— on the cover. As such, the whiteness suggests an object rather than a book, as does the fact that some passages of Woolf's essay have become almost indecipherable in Dahlberg's work due to the extent of the annotations. The whiteness also references pirate copying, as Dahlberg has noted,[152] like a literary equivalent to the music industry's white-label records that contain unsolicited tracks or bootlegs. Dahlberg's version of Woolf's book is, needless to say, exactly that—an unauthorised bootleg. During the initial installations of the work,[153] visitors were free to take home a copy of Dahlberg's book, which once again made a Swedish translation of Woolf's essay available—this time for free—thus substantiating Dahlberg's comment about copy and original. Of course, the medium of the book already harbours the negotiation of copy and original, and this relation is rehearsed again by the installation of 1000 free, illegal copies in exhibition spaces that hinges on the notion of the original artwork.

While the one thousand libraries of the title refer to the size of the edition (and not the number of Swedish libraries involved in the project), the work is also an archive in which Dahlberg, in the role of the archivist, has meticulously ensured that every marginal note, every underlining has been put in its right place. As such, the pages, lines and words become the archival system—the technical structure—that determines the categorisation of marginal notes and underlining. Moreover, those typographic impressions also determine the archivable content "even in its coming into existence and in its relationship to the future,"[154] as Derrida would have it. "A Room of One's Own / A Thousand Libraries" effectively negotiates the relationship, the hierarchy even, between author and reader, between text and margin.

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[151] Kajsa Dahlberg, *Kajsa Dahlberg. In a conversation with Niklas Östholm*, interview by Niklas Östholm, 2007, http://www.indexfoundation.se/upload/pdf_AconversationwithKajsaDahlberg.pdf, 3.
[152] Dahlberg, *In a conversation…*, 2.
[153] The work was shown as part of the Momentum Biennial in Moss, Norway and subsequently at Index in Stockholm, Sweden, both 2006. For the exhibition at The Museum of Contemporary Art in Roskilde, Dahlberg however had to refrain from giving away books due to the limited number of remaining books.
[154] Derrida, *Archive Fever*, 17.

2.10-11: Kajsa Dahlberg: “A Room of One's Own / A Thousand Libraries,” 2006. Book. Details. Courtesy of the artist. Photo: Maria Laub.

By bringing together the readers' annotations in one book, Dahlberg's work addresses Woolf's quest for a room that women can call their own. Woolf's extended essay argues for both a literal and figurative space for female writers within a literary tradition dominated by men. Through the fictional narrator Mary Beton, Woolf investigates the history of women in literature, both as characters and authors. Her findings are numerous with regard to female characters, but the description of them is peculiar—perhaps because male authors almost exclusively have authored these female characters. As for female authors, there are very few of them in the 18th century. Woolf is able to demonstrate a proliferation of female writers in the 19th century, but the conditions under which their literature was written will not suffice, according to Woolf, if women are to write fiction. Rather, "a woman must have money and a room of her own."[155] The efforts of women throughout the previous centuries are, however, crucial for the future work of female writers, "for masterpieces are not single and solitary births; they are the outcome of many years of thinking in common, of thinking by the body of the people, so that the experience of the mass is behind the single voice."[156]

This quote is one of the most underlined passages in Dahlberg's work. It describes not only the inheritance that Woolf and her contemporaries must assume; it also resonates through the latter part of the 20th and into the 21st century in the annotations made to Woolf's essay by readers. "A Room of One's Own / A Thousand Libraries" connects the book's readers over half a century, creating a community of readers. Woolf's words are reframed within a collective script of responses, bound together not only through individuals, but also through half a century. In Dahlberg's work, reading is no longer something one does alone. Reading, which in most cases is a solitary act, an intimate relationship between a reader and a book, has become a public matter. Rather than just solitary voices distributed throughout hundreds of library books, the marginal notes and underlinings become 'a thinking in common' in Dahlberg's work, effectively gaining a voice, an agency. In this way, "A Room of One's Own / A Thousand Libraries" indeed establishes a room, a room in which women are able to debate freely among those of a like mind. But this room is not merely “a room of one's own;” it transcends the notion of one's own room and introduces a new kind of common room[157], where a thinking in common can take place.

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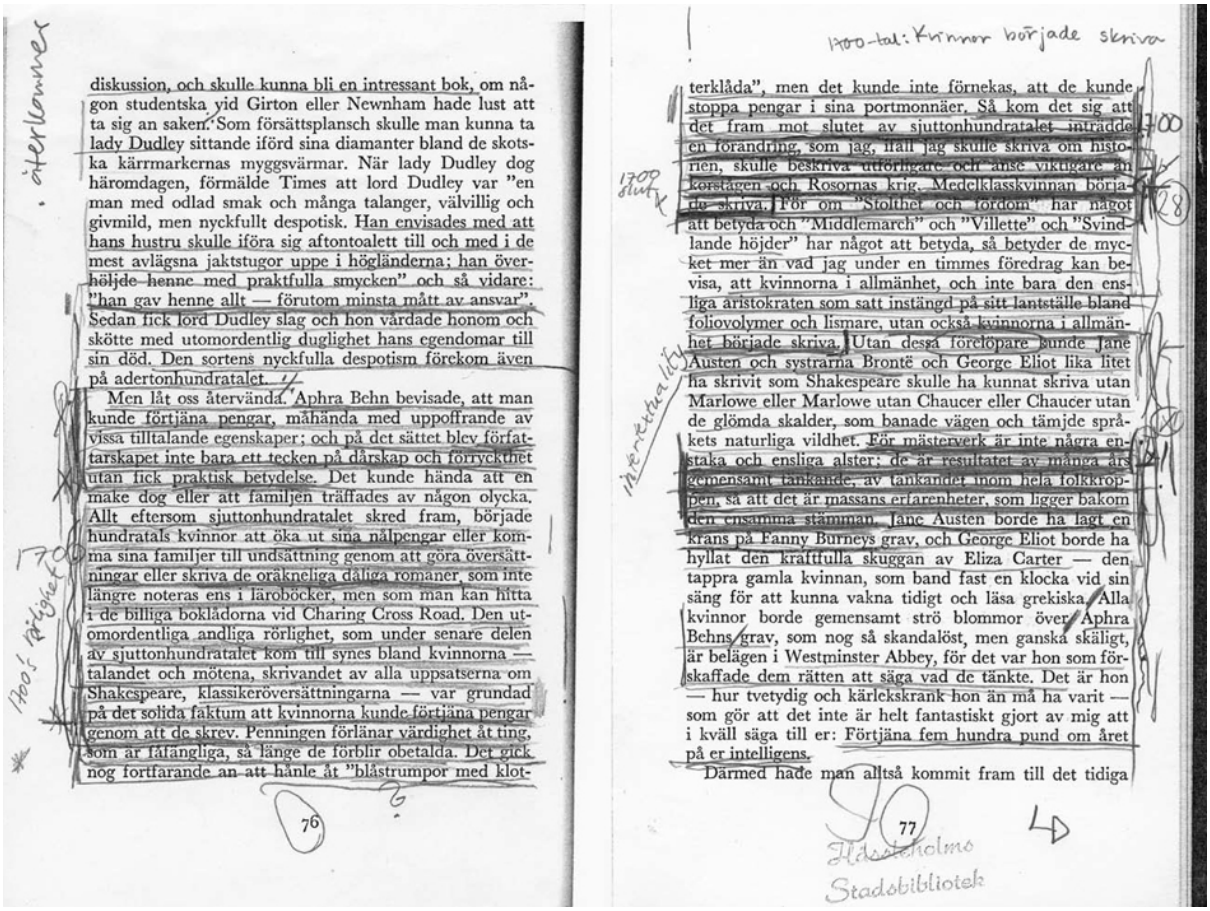
[155] Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One's Own* (London: The Hogarth Press Ltd., 1949), 6.
[156] Ibid., 98.
[157] Woolf describes the common sitting room as the only place in which a woman of the early nineteenth century was able to write. In this room, however, women would never have half an hour that they could call their own because of constant disturbances. Ibid., 100.



2.12: 2.10-11: Kajsa Dahlberg: "A Room of One's Own / A Thousand Libraries," 2006. Detail. Courtesy of the artist.

What "A Room of One's Own / A Thousand Libraries" points to is ultimately the archive as a productive device through which to induce collective agency. The archive is not "a tomb of the accidental trace"[158] as anthropologist Arjun Appadurai has phrased it, but rather, "more frequently the product of the anticipation of collective memory."[159] Now, the marginal notes gathered by Dahlberg in the work were, to all intents and purposes, personal in the first place. On the other hand, the library book is not a very discreet medium, and it will inevitably pass through the hands of many different people. So when scribbling down notes in the margin or underlining a specific passage, the readers-cum-writers of Woolf's essays cannot have been other than conscious of the fact that others might read it. Accordingly, the medium of the library book certainly harbours a potential anticipation of collective memory. By collecting, compiling and organising these traces, Dahlberg seizes this potential. Through her intervention, the work becomes a popular archive of everyday life, just like the personal

[158] Arjun Appadurai, "Archive and Aspiration," in *Information Is Alive,* ed. Joke Brouwer and Arjen Mulder (Rotterdam: V2_Publishing/NAI Publishers, 2003), 17.
[159] Ibid.

diary, the family photo album, the community museum, and the libraries of individuals to which Appadurai gives prominence. However, unlike the digital, migrant archives that Appadurai is concerned with, the material that comes to make up Dahlberg's work is not immediately inscribed in a collective substrate. Or, to be precise, readers of Woolf's essay may of course come across notes and underlinings by previous readers and become inspired by them, but in order to truly actualise the collective potentiality of this practice, Dahlberg's intervention is indispensable.

Appadurai addresses the precarious state of belonging and remembering particular to the migrant, and the ensuing urgency of constructing archives and identities. The aspiration, which Woolf articulates in her essay, is not entirely unlike that described by Appadurai, because women of Woolf's time also struggled to construct identities and archives of their own. In "A Room of One's Own / A Thousand Libraries", Woolf's essay, however, becomes precisely such an archive of aspiration. Already spelled out by Woolf,[160] the capacity to aspire is inscribed by every annotation, and augmented by Dahlberg's repetition. All these readers-cum-writers constitute a virtual collectivity, just like the ones Appadurai speaks about, and they too build memories out of connectivity[161]—it just takes a little longer without an Internet connection. However, what the practice of adding marginal notes and underlinings by hand may lack in immediacy, it makes up for in abundance and temporal range. Think of the Kindle tablet, for example, where readers also are able to share thoughts and comments—it will be a while before such digital devices can showcase a similar range of metadata. In this sense, "A Room of One's Own / A Thousand Libraries" also anticipates the future of digital metadata, and its potential as a generator of aspiration.[162] Because by inscribing oneself into a popular, digital archive of everyday life, will the experience of the mass not encourage the aspiration of the single voice?

Teasing Out The Political

As I described in the opening pages of this chapter, the title of Dahlberg's exhibition, *This Time It's Political,* establishes a number of expectations, most prominently, perhaps, by way of the temporality that the title inscribes (*this time* implies a before), the notion of iterability (*this time* something is different from its previous occurrence), and then of course the

[160] Woolf anticipates women a hundred years later ceasing to be the protected sex. Woolf, *A Room of One's Own*, 61.
[161] Appadurai, "Archive and Aspiration," 17.
[162] Appadurai asserts, "the archive is itself an aspiration rather than a recollection." Ibid., 16.

political nature of this iterability. Time is altogether a recurrent topic of the exhibition: Dahlberg's works perform or map out certain temporalities—"Fifty Minutes in Half an Hour" is even on the clock while simultaneously trying to unhinge clock time. On that note, I would like to briefly return to how I described my approach to the exhibition, because upon evoking the architectural layout of the galleries at The Museum of Contemporary Art, I announced that I would move *clockwise* through the exhibition—which is what I have done here. In hindsight this particular turn of phrase, however, comes across as a little awkward. Clockwise is, of course, merely an analogy—one that we use to describe a curved movement in the direction equivalent to that of the hands of a clock. My virtual movement through the galleries in this chapter does not really have anything to do with representing time. It is literally a figure of speech—at least, that is, if we do not consider the order of the artworks that this clockwise movement describes. In that case, I am in fact going back in time: "Fifty Minutes in Half an Hour" and "Industrial Building 1-6" are both from 2013, but "No unease can be noticed, all are happy and friendly" is from 2010, and "A Room of One's Own / A Thousand Libraries" from 2006. So, by using an analogy pertaining to the representation of time to describe my virtual movement through Dahlberg's exhibition at The Museum of Contemporary Art, I am, in writing, causing a minor time-space implosion. "Fifty Minutes in Half an Hour," of course, plays no immediate part in this slippage between analogy and temporality, but the video does convey to us that (clock) time may be playing tricks on us—the title alone already spells that out.

So, just as the architecture largely determined the layout of the exhibition, my reading too influences how we can understand Dahlberg's exhibition. The logic of this chapter is, in a certain sense, discretely coming apart due to the conflicting temporal movements that my reading performs. My reading adds yet another problematic set of temporalities to the exhibition. As I suggested in the beginning of this chapter, my analysis of the exhibition also produces two, if not conflicting, then at least distinctly different, archival modes; one that deactivates and one that assembles, or more pointedly, modes of inoperability and operability. "Fifty Minutes in Half an Hour" strives to unlock and emancipate—to profane the unprofanable to use Agamben's term—gestures and things that have become impossible to use. This is not only the case with the MTM motions; the radio programme has also been removed from public circulation and use on account of its inclusion into the DR Archive. As I argue in this chapter, Dahlberg's video momentarily releases the motions and the radio program from their confinement, and it is the act of rendering these things inoperable—this effective form of profanation and introduction of a new kind of use—that make these

operations political gestures. The MTM motions, in particular, are liberated from their enforced, prescribed actuality, and instead exposed in their own mediality. This sustainment of potentiality that harbours its own actuality is political, and happens precisely through repetition.

The additional three works of the exhibition are all defined by acts of archiving on Dahlberg's part. She assembles traces and coordinates a structure that archives. What was jotted down by single individuals in "No unease can be noticed, all are happy and friendly" and "A Room of One's Own / A Thousand Libraries" is aggregated to invoke a collectivity. The imprints may have been made in privacy, in solitude even, but that does not mean that they were solitary impulses. In these works, Dahlberg does not simply accumulate things; she singles out remains and puts them to work or, even better, she enables them to work.[163] All these marginal inscriptions, both in books and on postcards, display a troubling unrest; we cannot identify their origins. If the readers-cum-writers of Woolf's book were ever identifiable, Dahlberg's act of compilation has rendered identification practically impossible, and as for the postcard writers and recipients we only know them by their first names due to Dahlberg's re-inscription. In other words, we cannot properly identify the *whos*, and the *wheres* merely occupy the traces and the archives she has compiled. Dahlberg does not allow us to linger neurotically with origins; the abundance of traces, on the other hand, fends off impious forgetting. Since we cannot identify or, for that matter, see the ones that speak, all we can do is take them at their words,[164] that is, these traces that always mark the absence of a presence.

There is, it would seem, in these older pieces of Dahlberg's, a continued work of the past at work, a continued operability, a spectrality, or indeed as Derrida terms it, "a phantomic mode of production."[165] The work of Derrida's *thing* is transformative,[166] and we, as heirs before anything else, must take on this inheritance—not as something that is given to us but as a task that defines our very being. There is work to be done. Dahlberg has taken on this work of reaffirmation and transformation, and we are obliged to continue the work; to engage with the spectrality, and strive to interpret these traces in order to serve justice to those that are not here. To take on this responsibility is also a political act. By re-inscribing the traces, Dahlberg actively reaffirms the injunction of the past. In the case of "A Room of One's Own / A Thousand Libraries" she repeats the quest for a room of one's own by

[163] Derrida, *Specters of Marx,* 120.
[164] Ibid., 7.
[165] Ibid., 120.
[166] Ibid. 9.

augmenting it, thereby transforming the single voice into a collective agency. Her repetition is a commitment to justice beyond her immediate present; what we inherit from the past remains yet to come. The temporality of *this time* is indeed undecidable and, notably, political.

So, to return to my friend's observation that I described at the beginning of this chapter about the prevailing political implications of the exhibition space: I do acknowledge the pertinence of his comment. What he addresses seems to resonate with theorist Chantal Mouffe's thinking on this matter: she argues that "artistic practices have a necessary relation to politics, because they either contribute to the reproduction of the 'common sense' that secures a given hegemony or to its challenging."[167] But in the case of Dahlberg's exhibition, I am not so concerned with the general politics of exhibitions and artistic practices; rather, I am specifically interested in how Dahlberg's exhibition executes the promise of being political *this* time, that is, through iteration. And, as I have argued above, *This Time It's Political* produces two political modes by way of iteration. Not by masquerading as politics through the assumption of an explicitly political subject matter, but by surfacing and rehearsing traces of things and activities that become political precisely through these gestures.

[167] Chantal Mouffe, "Strategies of Radical Politics and Aesthetic Resistance," *Truth Is Concrete*, September 8, 2012, http://truthisconcrete.org/texts/?p=19.

3. The Flash and The Spectre: Temporalities at Work in Olof Olsson's performance *DR P3. 1963-2013. 50 Years of Danish State Authorised Pop Radio*

In January 2013, DR celebrated the 50th anniversary of P3, the national radio channel for popular music and entertainment. That same month, performance artist Olof Olsson embarked on a tour[168] with his performance, *DR P3. 1963-2013. 50 Years of Danish State Authorised Pop Radio.*[169] Contrary to what we might expect from the title, Olsson's performance does not offer a chronological account of the history of DR P3. In fact, it does not even stick to the years in question; Olsson lingers over the years leading up to 1963, he takes us a hundred years back in time, and he skips around the 50 years in question, by no means covering all of the period. He speaks about DR P3 but not exclusively, and rather than relying on the official documents of the DR Archive, he utilises a configuration of nugatory fragments: bits and pieces of radio history (DR and other), of cultural history, of popular culture, and of his own family history. The performance consists of numerous, often seemingly unrelated, narrative fragments and objects between which Olsson forges analogies and affinities. Olsson is, to borrow an expression from Walter Benjamin, poking about in the past, rummaging in the storeroom of examples and analogies.[170]

The first part of this chapter takes the form of a close reading of a number of stories and aspects of Olsson's performance using three of Benjamin's figures—the collector, the storyteller, and the historian—as reference points. Drawing on these figures enables me to acquire an understanding of the workings of the past in Olsson's performance, a past that permeates the performance by way of material objects as well as marginal, often personal anecdotes, and idiosyncratically addresses the critical moment in which not only the present

[168] The performance premiered at Studio 4 at the DR Concert House on January 10, 2013, and during the remainder of the month Olsson visited Viborg Kunsthal, Esbjerg Art Museum, Horsens Art Museum, Kunsthal Nord, Krognos Huset (SE), Sorø Art Museum, Krabbesholm Højskole and The Culture Yard, Elsinore.
[169] For a full video documentation of Olsson's performance, see Olof Olsson, *DR P3. 1963-2013. 50 Years of State Authorised Pop Radio*, Performance (video documentation), January 19, 2013, https://www.youtube.com /watch?v=r4AXdBJVwcg. The video documents Olsson's performance at Horsens Art Museum.
[170] Walter Benjamin, "Paralipomena to 'On the Concept of History,'" in *Walter Benjamin: Selected Writings, Volume 4: 1938-1940*, ed. Michael William Jennings and Howard Eiland (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap, 2004), 405.

but also, and especially, the present state of the DR Archive finds itself. As I described in Chapter 1, Olsson has indeed identified such a critical moment with regard to the DR Archive, and his performance is, in turn, conditioned by this troublesome encounter. I propose that we use Benjamin's understanding of remembrance—that is, to build constellations linking the present and the past—as a way to understand Olsson's historical mode of operation. Benjamin calls such constellations dialectical images, and they flash into view during moments of danger. Olsson's engagement with the past can, in other words, be said to institute a temporality characterised by the flash, but there is, however, also another temporality at work in the performance. This temporality—which I term the temporality of the spectre—operates in less conspicuous ways than that of the flash; as it happens, it might not even really be there, but I am, in the second part of this chapter, going to try to tease it out. The first indication of a ghostly presence hovers over the performance even before it begins. In advance of the performance, Olsson tells a humorous anecdote about a ventriloquist and a sound check, and this *exergue*-like anecdote produces a host of disembodied voices. As I will argue, Olsson invokes a spectral temporality with this anecdote; one that summons voices of the past and establishes expectations about what is to come. It might even begin to plot out an archive.

The Stuff of Memory

DR P3. 1963-2013. 50 Years of Danish State Authorised Pop Radio is a spoken performance.[171] It is in English, as are most of Olsson's performances,[172] and the nine performances of his tour varied in length from around 45 minutes to close to 75 minutes, most of them, however, lasting around an hour.[173] His set-up is quite simple: each venue is asked to provide a lectern and arrange chairs for the audience, and Olsson brings along everything else he needs including loudspeakers (Genelec 8040A), microphone (Neumann

[171] Olsson' performance is reminiscent of the lecture performance—a term that has surfaced in the last decade to describe artistic work operating at the interface between lecturing and performing. Despite the art form's current momentum and the coining of the term 'lecture performance', it is, as curator and writer Rike Frank has noted, related to a tradition of conceptual lectures, most prominently Robert Morris's 1964 re-enactment of art historian Erwin Panofsky's lecture "Ikonographie und Ikonologie" ("Studies in Iconology", 1939). The lecture-performance is, in short, characterised by its "intrinsic interrogation of what constitutes 'knowing,'" according to Frank. See Rike Frank, "When Form Starts Talking: On Lecture-Performances," *Afterall,* Issue 33 (2013): 5–15.
[172] English is Olsson's primary performance language. There are, however, a few exceptions, for example an edition of his talkshow series *RED ALERT! En talkshow ved katastrofens rand* (*RED ALERT! A Talkshow on the Brink of Disaster*) in Marabouparken in Sweden in June 2014, which he performed in Swedish.
[173] The longest performance was the premiere at DR's Studio 4, which included an intermission. For the remainder of the performances, Olsson, however, condensed the manuscript and scrapped the intermission.

3.1-2: Olof Olsson: *DR P3. 1963-2013. 50 Years of Danish State Authorised Pop Radio,* 2013. Performance. Horsens Art Museum. Photo: Trine Friis Sørensen

KMS 105), cables etc. as well as video equipment to document the performance. While the audience finds their seats, Olsson plays back a cassette tape of Billy Vaughn's *The Million Sellers*, and I eventually introduce him and the context of the performance before he takes the stage.

With him on stage Olsson brings a number of objects, among them a vinyl record of East German comedians entitled *Komiker-Parade*. He introduces the vinyl record after describing his grievances with the DR Sales Department, and explains: "The great advantage with this record / is that it comes from a state-controlled record company / that no longer exists. / From a state that no longer exists. / Which means / that I probably don't have to worry / about any copyright issues."[174] It is, however, not East German comedy that has caught Olsson's attention; in fact, he detaches the vinyl record from its original function of providing state-controlled entertainment by pointing out that "we are not here / to listen to totalitarian comedy."[175] Instead he plays back the introduction of the record by a funky East German announcer in order to determine whether it is possible to hear that it is in fact a totalitarian funky voice that is speaking.[176] This question, however, remains unresolved in the performance, but, as Olsson argues, both scenarios are equally frightening. Instead, Olsson focuses on the last remark of the announcer: "*Rille frei, wir sind auf dem richtigen Weg! / Keep the groove open, we're on the right way!*" To this he comments, "this is somewhat of a funny thing to hear / in East Germany / where one was not allowed to leave the country / because the pickup can only move to the center of the record."[177] Now, this vinyl record plays a significant role in Olsson's performance. It constitutes an entire world, so to speak, it encompasses the essence of its time, or—as Benjamin describes the collector's conception of his objects—an encyclopaedia of the epoch from which it comes.[178] The vinyl record gives Olsson access to a distinct era,[179] but its presence in the performance is prompted by specific and urgent circumstances of the present. In other words, as a material object the vinyl record enables Olsson to forge a relationship between the past and the present. This practice of

[174] Olof Olsson, *P3 Script 4 Horsens*, (unpublished, 2013), 21.
[175] Ibid., 22.
[176] Olsson deems the funky announcer voice to be totalitarian because it appears on a record released by a state controlled record company in GDR.
[177] Olsson, *P3 Script 4 Horsens*, 23.
[178] Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, ed. Howard Eiland, Kevin MacLaughlin, and Rolf Tiedemann (Cambridge, MA [etc.]: Belknap Press, 1999), 205.
[179] GDR is a recurrent topic in Olsson's performance. For example, at the age of 8 months, Olsson explains at an earlier point in the performance, he went on his first trip abroad—with his parents—to a Baltic peace week in Rostock in GDR. Olsson's father had won the trip in a radio quiz. Olsson goes on to ponder how this early exposure to a totalitarian regime may have influenced him. Furthermore, Olsson uses the example of industrial design in GDR in order to describe the masochism of public service radio—in short, the *amarmad* dilemma, which I will get to shortly.

3.3: Olof Olsson: still from documentation video of *DR P3. 1963-2013. 50 Years of Danish State Authorised Pop Radio,* 2013. Viborg Kunsthal. Courtesy of the artist.

making past objects present resonates distinctly with Benjamin's understanding of the collector. Olsson does not immerse himself in the world of the vinyl record; he presents it in our time, which, according to Benjamin, is characteristic of the collector as well as the anecdote.[180]

Among the other objects that Olsson brings on stage are a Fischer Price tape recorder, a clock, the autobiography of DR TV and radio host Jørgen de Mylius, *Tak for al musikken* (Thank you for all the music), as well as a number of printed photographs and graphic advertisements. Along with the vinyl record, this miscellaneous collection is very different from the archive of official radiophonic heritage that Olsson has left behind. His objects occupy marginal positions in the cultural sphere; some of them are commonplace and easily obtainable, other are curiosities, but all of them are mass-produced objects—mass culture rather than the mass art of Eduard Fuchs' collection that Benjamin describes.[181] We might catch a glimpse of the past in its "splendid festive gown" but most of the objects represent the

[180] Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, 206.
[181] Eduard Fuchs, born in 1870, is the focal point and exemplary collector on whom Benjamin bases his 1937 essay "Eduard Fuchs: Collector and Historian".

past in its "shabby working clothes".[182] Olsson puts all of these objects to specific use during the performance; they underpin his narrative in a temporal manner, either by making present particular moments in time or—in the case of the clock—by demarcating the present and presence of the performance.[183] In different ways, the objects indicate an inclination towards a form of practical memory,[184] of remembering with and through things by making them present in the performance.

Something of a Storyteller

Another trace of the past introduced into the performance is a striking appearance of DR radio host and DJ Jørgen de Mylius on Swedish television in 1980. Unlike any Swedish TV host at the time, Mylius wore a lot of make-up and was fashionably pale in an Avant-garde way. It made him look like a pop star—like David Bowie even—so Olsson, 33 years later, relates his first encounter with this key character of his performance. On account of this TV appearance, Mylius became the gateway to the 1980s for Olsson. From a present-day Danish perspective, Olsson's genuine admiration of Mylius might come across as a little peculiar. Like DR P3, Mylius too celebrates his 50th anniversary *on the air* in January 2013, and while he most definitely was a trailblazer when it comes to introducing the Danes to rock 'n' roll music on public radio in the early 1960s, his edge has become considerably less cutting over the years, and he is known today as a popular personality of family-friendly entertainment in Denmark. Most audiences of Olsson's performances were for that reason in all likelihood already familiar with Mylius, but Olsson's account of him as incorporating the zeitgeist of the 1980s in an edgy, pop star-like fashion has, I expect, been somewhat surprising. It certainly was to me.

The anecdote about Mylius on Swedish TV is based on personal experience and shaped by Olsson's memory of himself at the age of 15. It is also, significantly, an outsider's perception of Mylius, and it makes the audience—all too familiar with Mylius—wonder: Did

[182] Walter Benjamin, "Eduard Fuchs: Collector and Historian," *New German Critique* 5, Spring 1975, 56.
[183] Olsson would often have the audience decide on the duration of the performance and set the timer of the clock accordingly.
[184] For Benjamin, himself a collector of books and citations, practical memory is something one acquires through practical experience, tactility even. The collector, for example, handles his objects with affection both for their own sake, but also because they function as lenses through which to access the past. Whether concrete things or citations, Benjamin's practical memory operates by prying loose these crystallisations of time from the depths of the past and bringing them to the surface of the present. Benjamin speaks of collecting as a form of practical memory, (Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, 205), and I am, in addition, loosely drawing on Hannah Arendt's metaphor of the pearl diver in her writing on Benjamin. Hannah Arendt, "Introduction. Walter Benjamin: 1892-1940," in *Illuminations* (New York: Schocken Books, 1986), 38–51.

we miss something? Does this Danish-Swedish-Dutch performance artist have a point about the groundbreaking importance of Mylius' contribution to Danish mainstream media? In other words, Olsson re-introduces us to Mylius and prompts us to reconsider his significance. We may not share the experience or the perception of Mylius, but we acquire it through Olsson's account. Like Benjamin's storyteller, Olsson "takes what he tells from experience—his own or that reported by others—and he in turn makes it the experience of those who are listening to his tale."[185] Of storytelling Benjamin adds: "It sinks the thing into the life of the storyteller, in order to bring it out of him again. Thus traces of the storyteller cling to the story the way the handprints of the potter cling to the clay vessel."[186] Olsson not only leaves his proverbial handprints on the narrative; he also filters historical occurrences and characters[187] through an autobiographical and rather idiosyncratic index.

In addition to moulding the past in order to narrate it in the present, Olsson also continuously adjusted and developed his performance. The performance is scripted, for sure, but performed through an oral delivery that was modified from performance to performance. During the performance tour, the manuscript was revised following the first couple of performances before its role progressively diminished in significance as Olsson became familiar with the narrative and was able to retell it from memory. In addition, the manuscript was but a subtext of the performance; Olsson digressed, improvised, and added to the scripted stories in numerous ways. These continuous variations resonate with Benjamin's description of an oral tradition in which "the perfect narrative is revealed through the layers of a variety of retellings."[188] I realise that Benjamin is making a particular argument about epic forms as modes of historical consciousness specific to his time, about the decline of storytelling on account of the then-burgeoning novel form, which in turn is threatened by information, and I am not proposing a corresponding juncture by tracing Benjamin's storyteller in Olsson's performance practice. And I am certainly not saying that all performance artists are reminiscent of Benjamin's storyteller. But Olsson is. The kind of storytelling that Olsson puts to use in his performance is of course not the historically specific form that Benjamin describes, but rather a narrative technique: a narrative technique that does not rely on verifiability but borrows if not from the miraculous—which, according to

[185] Walter Benjamin, "The Storyteller. Reflections on the Works of Nikolai Leskov," in: Hannah Arendt (ed.), *Illuminations*, New York: Schocken Books, 1986, 87.
[186] Ibid., 91-92.
[187] Other than Mylius, for example the state control of alcohol and radio in Sweden and Denmark.
[188] Ibid., 93.

Benjamin, is an inclination of the storyteller[189]—then at least from the extraordinary and, on one occasion during the performance, from the extra-terrestrial.[190]

A Blast from the Past

One of the stories that Olsson tells is a finely-tuned analogy between DR as a public service provider and a regional sandwich. He opens the performance thus: "I think that the relocation / of DR — / the Danish national public broadcasting service — / to DR Byen — the DR City — / on the island of Amager / is very suitable. // Because isn't the ambition for DR — / to be like an *amarmad*."[191] He goes on to explain that an amarmad[192] is a sandwich consisting of a piece of rye bread and a piece of wheat bread, and by only showing the wheat bread side, the amarmad is used to lure children into also eating the healthy rye bread. This combination of substance and fun is, according to Olsson, the core principle of DR as a national public service provider, specifically with regard to the radio channels P1 and P3.[193] "It has to be good *to* the Danes. / But it also has to be good *for* the Danes."[194] However, the guiding principles of these radio channels are not as clear-cut as one would think, Olsson argues towards the end of the performance. P1 worry that they may be losing their audience and feel that they need to appeal to a wider audience, and P3, on the other hand, know that they are supposed to be the most *Dionysian* part of DR, but of course not as Dionysian as the commercial popular music radio stations. This conflict is, according to Olsson, symptomatic of the masochism inherent in being a public service institution.[195]

The combination of high and low culture is also at work in another of Olsson's stories about what Denmark and Sweden deem necessary to have under state control. In Sweden it is the sale of alcohol, in Denmark it is radio waves. The comparison rides on two narrative threads: one that recollects the last hundred years of Swedish history through the lens of alcohol consumption—from poverty and emigration to America to state control of the sale of alcohol and the Swedish welfare state—and another that is concerned with moments in the history of state-controlled radio in Denmark from its inauguration in 1925 and the rise and

[189] Ibid., 89.
[190] As I will elaborate on in more detail later, Olsson constructs an analogy about an alien anthropologist in order to explain how he would have liked to engage with the DR Archive, and specifically with the funky announcer voice on DR P3.
[191] Olsson, *P3 Script 4 Horsens*, 2
[192] A regional sandwich from the island of Amager, normally spelled amagermad; here, however, Olsson uses the dialectical pronunciation and spelling 'Amar,' which is short for Amager.
[193] P1 is DR's talk radio for current affairs and culture; P3 is the channel for popular music and entertainment.
[194] Ibid., 2
[195] Ibid., 26

fall of pirate radio station Radio Mercur,[196] up to the launch of DR P3 in 1963, which gave the Danes the jazz and rock 'n' roll that they wanted, but under the safe purview of the state. As he tells both these stories, Olsson shows the audience printed images and advertisements in order to support his narrative.[197]

It is, however, not state control of radio and alcohol, but rather the *lack* of such that proves most significant to Olsson's performance. Around the turn of the 20th century, before the institution of state control of the sale of alcohol, times were tough for Swedish peasants and many turned to the bottle for comfort. Almost a fifth of the Swedes left their poverty-stricken homeland in the hope of a more prosperous life in America. But not Olsson's great grandfather, who, Olsson speculates, was possibly too drunk to leave. So the Olsson family

3.4: Olof Olsson: still from documentation video of *DR P3. 1963-2013. 50 Years of Danish State Authorised Pop Radio,* 2013. Kunsthal Nord, Aalborg. Courtesy of the artist.

[196] The commercial pirate radio station Radio Mercur broadcasted jazz and rock 'n' roll from a ship on international waters in Øresund between Denmark and Sweden from 1958-1962. Even before it started broadcasting, Radio Mercur was deemed by the Danish press to be a pirate radio station due to their ensuing breach of the state monopoly on radio broadcasting in Denmark. Radio Mercur, however, did not technically speaking breach any laws but exploited a loophole in Danish broadcasting legislation. Jacob Vrist Nielsen, "Piratradio i æteren," [Pirat Radio on the Airwaves], Radiofoni - Post & Tele Museum, August 27, 2013, http://www.ptt-museum.dk/museumsposten /tidligere_artikler/radiofoni/?id=336.

[197] The prints include the logo of the Swedish state-controlled alcohol retail chain, Systembolaget, a graphic campaign against alcohol consumption by Systembolaget, an Absolute Vodka advertisement, and photographs of the founder of Radio Mercur, Peer Jansen, the ship Radio Mercur as well as jazz and rock 'n' roll DJs at Radio Mercur.

stayed in Sweden, where Olsson's father, two generations later, could listen to Radio Mercur,[198] which was broadcasting from a ship on international waters in Øresund between Denmark and Sweden.[199] On Radio Mercur, Olsson's father heard a commercial for holidays in Mallorca, and so he went there and met a Dutch woman, who would later become his wife and Olsson's mother. In Olsson's account, his very existence is, in other words, curiously dependent on the absence of Swedish state control of the sale of alcohol around the turn of the 20th century, and the breach of the Danish state control of radio between 1958-1962. Taking the stage at Studio 4 at DR's Concert House to premiere his performance on DR P3, Olsson incorporates a peculiar defiance of things state-controlled (at least radio and the sale of alcohol). These comparisons of state control and the lack thereof are certainly astounding, and even more so by acquiring a corporeal form in Olsson himself. He does not merely convey to us these intricate coincidences; they condition his very presence on the stage.

Olsson's use of the vinyl record, which I described earlier, also establishes a rather unexpected connection through the analogy of copyright held by two state institutions: a state-controlled record company from GDR, Litera, and the Danish Broadcast Corporation, DR. To fully grasp the meaning of this constellation of the present and the past, I draw again upon Benjamin, who demands that the researcher (in this case, Olsson) must "become conscious of the critical constellation in which precisely this fragment of the past finds itself in precisely this present."[200] For a constellation to be able to take form, time has to come to a momentary standstill, so that thinking can be arrested in a constellation saturated with tensions. It is, in other words, the task of remembrance in Benjamin's work to build constellations linking the present and the past.[201] Benjamin calls such a constellation a dialectical image, and it flashes up in the moment of danger when conformism threatens "both the content of the tradition and its receivers."[202] It would appear that Olsson has faced exactly such a critical moment and become aware of a dialectical image. His controversy

[198] People in both Denmark and Sweden were able to listen to Radio Mercur, and it quickly became very popular. A survey even indicates that Radio Mercur, at prime time between 7 and 8 pm, would have more listeners than DR's two radio channels, P1 and P2, see Nielsen, "Piratradio i æteren."
[199] Olsson's father comes from Helsingborg in Sweden, located where Øresund, the sound between Denmark and Sweden, is at its narrowest, and in Sweden there was also state control of radio. Radio Mercur was a Danish enterprise funded by Danish advertising and depending on the above-mentioned loophole in Danish broadcasting legislation, but its transmissions could also be picked up in Sweden. The loophole was eventually closed when the Danish parliament introduced new broadcasting legislation with effect from August 1, 1962. Ibid.
[200] Benjamin, "Eduard Fuchs," 28.
[201] Michael Löwy, *Fire Alarm: Reading Walter Benjamin's On the Concept of History* (London ; New York: Verso, 2005), 95.
[202] Walter Benjamin, "Theses on the Philosophy of History," in *Illuminations*, ed. Hannah Arendt, trans. Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken Books, 1986), 255.

with the DR Sales Department testifies to the existence of excessive restrictions in respect of accessing and playing back cultural heritage produced by a public service institution. Cultural heritage has, it seems, become a commodity that can only be acquired at the right price—this is truly, to use Benjamin's wording, a moment of danger that threatens both the content of the tradition and its receivers. On account of this dangerous moment, Olsson seizes hold of a memory; in this case a vinyl record of East German comedians, and a dialectical tension between the past and the present brings the present into a critical state. The tension of this dialectical image is undeniable; are DR's copyright restrictions really comparable to a totalitarian regime? And can they only be undone by the downfall of this regime? The vinyl record of East German comedians, peripheral to say the least, is truly a blast from the past, and along with Olsson's anecdotal and personal take on history it testifies to someone who brushes history against the grain.[203]

Reading What Was Never Written

So, what do these figures—the collector, the storyteller, and the historian—tell us about the workings of the past in Olsson's performance—or perhaps more to the point, what do they tell us about how Olsson *works on* the past in his performance? Because it should, at this point, be clear that Olsson has little interest in the past as it really was.[204] He sidesteps the official historical records of the DR Archive and recovers instead a number of discrete historical fragments—among them a vinyl record of East German comedians, Mylius on Swedish TV, and Olsson's father listening to Radio Mercur—most of which have been left out of the official records or hidden away in the heaps of cultural heritage. Benjamin's figures operate on precisely such byways of the past and unsettle the complacency of official history.

However, while the collector can be considered a kind of historian[205]—both deal with fragments of debris —and hence can be said to support the temporality of the flash, Olsson's storyteller-like traits do not constitute a quite as clear-cut historical mode of operation. Storytelling, in Benjamin's essay, testifies to an ability to process and morph experiences through narratives—not in order to produce "an accurate concatenation of definite events, but [to show] the way these are embedded in the great inscrutable course of the world."[206] So while Benjamin's historian pries loose fragments of the past through an act of remembrance

[203] Ibid., 257.
[204] In "Theses on the Philosophy of History," Benjamin writes: "To articulate the past historically does not mean to recognize it "the way it really was."" Ibid., 255.
[205] The title of Benjamin's essay on the collector is "Eduard Fuchs: Collector and *Historian*" (my italics).
[206] Benjamin, "Eduard Fuchs," 96.

that ultimately seeks redemption in the present for the sufferings and sufferers of the past, the storyteller, on the other hand, is a guardian of tradition. He relies on both personal and collective memory, and through his stories he preserves and transforms these stories, thereby sustaining their place in memory. There is, in other words, nothing *flashy* about the storyteller, but like the collector and the historian he does not linger with the past as it was.

The aspects and fragments of Olsson's performance that I have developed above only make up parts of his performance; there are other tangents and narrative components at work that might lend themselves to different understandings. I am, in other words, neither attempting to typecast Olsson's performance practice through these literal figures of speech nor to discipline the performance along the lines of Benjamin's temporal model. But tracing out the contours of these figures in Olsson's performance enables me to elucidate a subversive potentiality in his digressive narrative, one that takes its clue from his decision not to work with the DR Archive, which, I would argue, is ultimately a rejection of official history. Instead Olsson relies on nugatory fragments of cultural history, or—to paraphrase one of Benjamin's citations—on reading what was never written.[207] By assembling a heterogeneous assortment of historical objects and documents from outside the institutional archive, Olsson is able to produce a profoundly unforeseeable account of radio history.

Show Time

Now, as I mentioned in the introduction, I would argue that apart from the flash across history described above, there is another temporality at work in Olsson's performance. A temporality that lurks suggestively as a prolusion even before the beginning of the performance and makes presumptions about what is to come. It is a temporality that relies on a host of voices that Olsson introduces at the very beginning of the performance—indeed *before* the beginning in a sense. Upon taking the stage during his performance tour, Olsson would do a sound check, asking the audience: "Can you hear me?" and then tell a short anecdote about a sound check and the ventriloquist Paul Winchell.[208]

> *A ventriloquist is a person who's able to speak without moving his or her mouth.*
> *What in Danish is called <u>en bugtaler.</u>*
>
> *In the 1950s one of the most famous ventriloquists in America*
> *was Paul Winchell.*

[207] Benjamin uses this turn of phrase by Hugo von Hofmannsthal as an opening citation in the section on the flâneur in *The Arcades Project,* 416.
[208] Olsson told the anecdote about Paul Winchell in seven of the nine performances of the tour.

He was so famous that he had his own radio show.
Where he would perform together with his dummies.

One evening
Winchell was to appear
on the Ed Sullivan television show,
with one of his dummies.

During the rehearsals
Winchell discovered a problem with the sound.

The show had a boom operator, who would hold a microphone —
attached to a boom —
over the head of whoever was speaking.

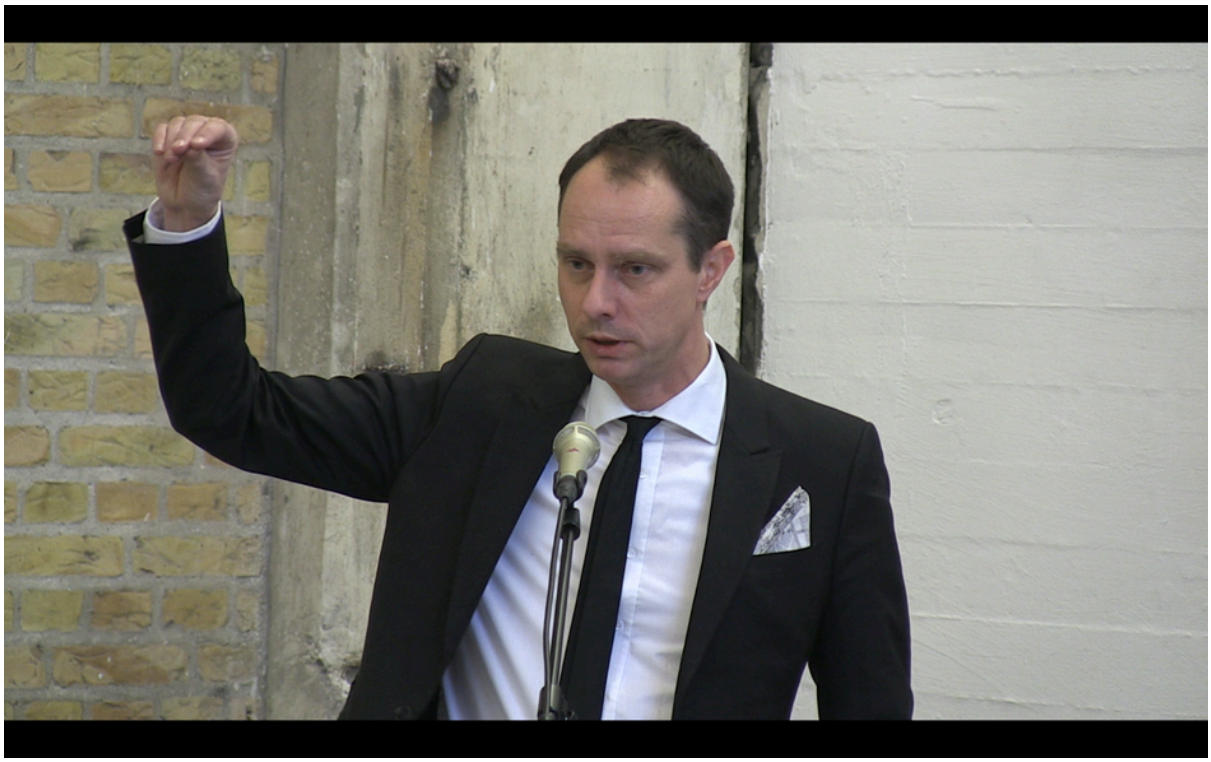
While Winchell was speaking
everything went fine.
But when the dummy spoke
the sound disappeared.

Because when the dummy spoke
the boom operator
moved the microphone
from Winchell
to the dummy.[209]

As the anecdote unfolds it plays with the conventions of ventriloquism: In ventriloquism, we are led to assume that the puppet speaks. This is due to the fact that the ventriloquist has mastered the art of speaking without moving his lips and in effect conjures up the impression that his voice issues from somewhere else. While ventriloquism pivots on this contract that we as an audience willingly abide by, we are also fully aware of the deceptive nature of this understanding. Of course, what makes ventriloquism so enticing is that the ventriloquial voice indeed seems to appear out of nowhere; the ventriloquist does not seem to be moving his lips. In order to appreciate this, we obviously need to see the performance; this would appear to be a premise of the ventriloquial contract. Or so one would think.

The ventriloquist anecdote produces two quite humorous moments, both of which adhere to what philosopher Simon Critchley defines as the incongruity theory of humour, according to which "humour is produced by the experience of a felt incongruity between what we know or expect to be the case, and what actually takes place in the joke, gag, jest or blague."[210] Olsson's statement that Winchell had his own radio show where he performed with his puppets is the first humorous moment. We know that the sleight of ventriloquism is dependent not only on hearing the puppet 'speak' but also on seeing the ventriloquist not

[209] In the performances, Olsson digressed slightly from the typed version, often asking the audience: "Does anybody know what the word ventriloquist means?" Here, however, I quote from one of his manuscripts. Olsson, *P3 Script 4 Horsens*, 1.
[210] Simon Critchley, *On Humour*, Thinking in Action (London ; New York: Routledge, 2002), 3.



3.5-6: Olsson illustrates the ventriloquist puppet (top) and the ventriloquist puppet and the boom operator (bottom). Olof Olsson: stills from documentation video of *DR P3. 1963-2013. 50 Years of Danish State Authorised Pop Radio,* 2013. Kunsthal Nord, Aalborg. Courtesy of the artist.

move his lips. This, of course, is countered by the jest, which is also a biographical fact: Winchell performed on the radio. So what would seem to be a premise for buying into the ventriloquial act is suddenly gone, testifying, according to cultural theorist Steven Connor, to "a remarkably persistent desire to believe in the autonomy of the voice"[211] as well as the popularity of ventriloquist acts and the prominence of radio in the middle of the 20th century. While the anecdote about Winchell hinges on the opening sound check, I believe that it also functions as a warm-up exercise in order for Olsson to size up his audience, and the ventriloquist-on-the-radio quip is definitely the more subtle of the two humorous moments.

The second humorous moment is the reason for the failing sound: the boom operator moves the microphone from Winchell to the puppet whenever it supposedly speaks. Here what we know is that it is in fact the ventriloquist who speaks; however, as the joke reveals, convention becomes reality as the boom operator moves the microphone to the puppet. We are laughing at the boom operator for not understanding the convention, but we are also laughing in anticipation of the puppet speaking by itself, of the thing behaving like a person. It is just plain funny to mic up a puppet—the microphone of course indicates that the puppet might have something to say. What the humour accomplishes is that it "familiarizes us with a common world through its miniature strategies of defamiliarization"[212] (a ventriloquist on the radio), it reinforces consensus[213] (we agree on the ludicrousness of a radio ventriloquist), and returns us to a specific ethos,[214] (we who understand the cultural practices of ventriloquism, radio and show business). The common sense of humour, which is established by the anecdote, creates a feeling of belonging to a group, a communality among the audience and the performer. We are off to a good start.

Olsson either opened with this anecdote or he told it after some context-specific improvisations and opening remarks. In many cases, the ventriloquist anecdote led to *en route* digressions, including ventriloquists vs. magicians, the word 'ventriloquist' in other languages (bugtaler / buktalere / buktaler / Bauchredner), telephone sales jobs, President Nixon, microphone technology and the fear of performance art,[215] but Olsson would always

[211] Steven Connor, *Dumbstruck: A Cultural History of Ventriloquism* (Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 22.
[212] Critchley, *On Humour*, 18.
[213] Ibid., 11.
[214] Ibid., 73.
[215] For an extended version of the ventriloquist anecdote, see Olof Olsson, *A Little Tale About Paul Winchell*, Performance excerpt (video documentation), January 26, 2013, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vKmA-m5Bwxk.

tell the ventriloquist anecdote before commencing with the rest of the scripted performance. At DR's Studio 4 in Copenhagen, he even told the anecdote before taking out his manuscript, and at Horsens' Art Museum he announced to the audience after finishing the anecdote, "we are getting into the performance now." Furthermore, in all versions of the manuscript the ventriloquist anecdote is italicised, unlike the rest of the manuscript, which is typed in Roman font. From this I gather that the anecdote functions as an epigraph or an *exergue*[216] of the performance.[217] So, in the next sections I will unpack the ventriloquist anecdote and investigate how it operates as an exergue.

In Advance of the Beginning

Cultural theorist Irit Rogoff describes the exergue as something that "comes in advance of an argument or the playing out of a hoped for argument." She continues:

> The exergue is a citation, a found object or quote which alerts us to both what might be coming but also establishes its relation to previous thought. In part the exergue establishes a heightened atmosphere of what is to be expected, a frisson that communicates the intention and the spirit behind that intention in advance of the thing itself. Whether a quotation from a famous philosopher or poet, a tombstone, a snatch from a popular song or an advertising jingle, it sets the tone, maps out the archive in advance of its constitution as such, and delivers a promise. But it also complicates the access to the problematic, setting up a number of false trails and oblique entry points, making clear that the promise of access to a problem is one that cannot be met. What makes the exergue so appealing is that it is preliminary, in advance of the argument and yet it is knowing, knowing of what is to come. It rehearses in itself the hopeless duality of what it is to know, to claim knowledge, to try and set it up for others, to recognise its limitations, to try and rescue it through some device that speaks from the corner of one's mouth, through somebody else's speech.[218]

Rogoff's description seems to be, in part, based on Derrida's conception of the exergue in *Archive Fever*, in which he writes: "To cite before beginning is to give the key through the resonance of a few words, the meaning or form of which ought to set the stage."[219] For Derrida the exergue is also "the first figure of the archive (...) at once *institutive* and *conservative*"[220] and brings to the fore "the violence of the archive itself."[221] But whereas

[216] Origin of exergue: French, from New Latin *exergum,* from Greek *ex* out of +*ergon* work. Merriam-Webster.com, s.v. "Exergue," accessed December 5, 2014, http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/exergue.
[217] The anecdote is however not a direct quote from somewhere. Olsson has, most likely, extracted the anecdote from James Maguire's *Impresario: The Life and Times of Ed Sullivan* (New York: Billboard Books, 2006) and added some additional biographical information.
[218] Irit Rogoff, "The Exergue - 'All Is Fair in Love and War,'" Dictionary of War, June 2, 2006, http://dictionaryofwar.org/concepts/exergue.
[219] Derrida, *Archive Fever*, 12.
[220] Ibid.
[221] Ibid., 7.

Derrida's exergue is invested in inscription, in typographic printing and the graphic mark,[222] Rogoff identifies the exergue as speech, as a sort of displaced speech that one channels in an attempt to come to terms with the act of claiming knowledge, that is, to write a text or—in this case—to speak in front of an audience. In short, to have something to say. While Olsson's performance is scripted and hence hinges on writing, it becomes performance by way of speech, and I would therefore like to draw upon Rogoff, knowing that Derrida's inscription haunts the term. Speech, of course, and not least "somebody else's speech," is also paramount to ventriloquism.

In the exergue that comes before the beginning of Olsson's performance, we are brought back in time to the 1950s; before the beginning of DR P3, before anyone in Denmark had even thought of launching a radio channel for popular music. In other words, the anecdote not only comes in advance of the performance, it also locates—through its subject matter—this pre-beginning before the commencement of Danish popular music radio, whether pirate or state-authorised. In fact, we are not even in Denmark but in America, in a television studio in New York, and the show business scenario that Olsson describes takes place during the sound check, that is, before the television broadcast begins. In addition, the action of the boom operator in moving the microphone from Winchell to the puppet suspends the beginning even after the events of the anecdote have played out. We are not quite ready to begin yet (somebody needs to move back the microphone).

Whodunnit

Now, the anecdote is not merely an amusing opening to the performance, it also complicates the status of the voice. The voice that speaks to us, the audience, comes to us through numerous incorporeal disguises, numerous disembodiments. According to philosopher Mladen Dolar, the human voice itself already emanates from a hidden place—"every emission of the voice is by its very essence *ventriloquism*."[223] As an exergue it speaks, according to Rogoff, "through somebody else's speech", another displaced body, and this voice speaks about a ventriloquist and his puppet, one more disembodied voice, to which the radio adds an additional disembodiment. These various voices, folded into each other, are caught up in and stripped down by so many displaced bodies, and yet the only body that itself has no voice and barely a body, just a crude, uncanny appearance of a body—the puppet—is

[222] Ibid., 8-23.
[223] Mladen Dolar, *A Voice and Nothing More*, Short Circuits (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 2006), 70.

expected to speak. Now, this is indeed "a remarkably persistent desire to believe in the autonomy of the voice!"[224] It can come as no surprise that the removal of the microphone results in the disappearance of sound, but it is not just silence: someone is barred from being heard. When the microphone is shifted from the ventriloquist to the puppet, the divisible voice is muted, the sound is gone, and there is just silence. If the exergue really is knowing of what is to come, as Rogoff argues, what is the anecdote telling us? What does this silence mean: who is not being heard, what is not being said, and who is responsible for this omission?

It seems pertinent to identify the injured party, line up the usual suspects and determine the nature of the misdeed. Is the victim here the artist or perhaps the historian? In the essay "Towards the Heterosphere: Curator as Translator", cultural critic Boris Buden argues that historians have lost their monopoly over the interpretation of the past and now have to share their role with the judge, the witness, the media, the legislator and not least the artist and the curator.[225] The microphone may not have been moved away entirely from the historian, but in this particular situation (s)he has to share it with a performance artist. And Olsson, while not deprived of a microphone, still asks the audience at the beginning of every performance, "Can you hear me?" Who or what is guilty of misconduct—the curator, the archivist or just cultural memory in general? The curator constantly performs acts of inclusion and exclusion; every exhibition constitutes a delimitation,[226] and in this business of selecting and disregarding the archivist would seem to be the grand master. When it comes to cultural memory, we are no better off. Just as every memory is selective, "every cultural memory is discriminatory," Buden asserts;[227] forgetting and repressing run parallel with memorising.

So the omission—the misdeed—that can be said to be played out by the boom operator in the anecdote might just be precisely what "maps out the archive in advance of its constitution as such,"[228] what delimits the archive and institutes the archival violence. Because does the archive not carry out exactly this violent demarcation of what is heard and what is ignored, what is remembered and what is repressed? Rogoff argues that the exergue delivers a promise of an archive, "it maps out the archive in advance of its constitution as

[224] Connor, *Dumbstruck*, 22.
[225] Buden borrows this argument from historian Pierre Nora, but Buden is the one who adds artist and curator to today's list of co-historians. Boris Buden, “Towards the Heterosphere: Curator as Translator,” in *Performing the Curatorial: Within and beyond Art*, ed. Maria Lind (Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2012), 26.
[226] Ibid., 31.
[227] Ibid.
[228] Rogoff, “The Exergue.”

such,"[229] and Olsson's exergue lends itself entirely to that pledge. Not only does it "establish a heightened atmosphere of what is to be expected,"[230] it rehearses the delimitations of the archive. What the anecdote relates to us is fundamentally an archival gesture; the position of the microphone decides what we hear and what we unable to hear.

Be Your Own Psychic Radio Station[231]

Why use ventriloquism as a lead-in to the performance in the first place? The title of the performance in itself, it would seem, quite matter-of-factly describes the purpose of the performance: it will explore 50 years of Danish state authorised pop radio. Nonetheless, Olsson brings up a ventriloquist at the very beginning of his performance. What are we to make of this? How does the act of ventriloquism convey the aspirations of the performance; how does it establish a relation to previous thought and alert us to what might be coming, as Rogoff proposes? And how do all the disembodied voices that the exergue releases talk their way back into the performance? How do they speak through and of the performance? In what follows I would like to make the case that Olsson, by bringing up a ventriloquist at the beginning of his performance, not merely unhinges the voice from its source; he also invokes an electrified history of spectral agency. Past and future not only haunt the exergue, they upset the entire performance both temporally and epistemically.

From Dolar we already know that the voice inherently is ventriloquial, or acousmatic, as he terms the voice whose source cannot be seen.[232] Even when Olsson is performing in front of us and moving his lips while speaking, his voice is acousmatic because the actual source of the voice is hidden inside his body.[233] The principle of the acousmatic, however, becomes more pronounced in the ventriloquist's projection of his voice—a technique that today has been appropriated by technologies such as radio, gramophone etc., which has made it universal and hence trivial.[234] We are surrounded by voices whose sources we cannot see: on the telephone or the radio voices emanate from distant places, and sound recording media enable us to listen to past voices that are present in neither time nor space. While the voice of

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[229] Ibid.
[230] Ibid.
[231] Maina L. Tafe, a direct voice medium, in her article "Development of Mediumship", published in *The Direct Voice I* (April 1930), urges her readers to “Be your own psychic radio station.” Connor, *Dumbstruck*, 368.
[232] Dolar borrows the term from Michel Chion, who has it from Pierre Schaeffer, who again ascribes the term to Pythagoras. Pythagoras taught his disciples from behind a curtain for five years. During this time, his pupils only heard his voice but never saw him or were allowed to speak themselves. Dolar, *A Voice*, 60–61.
[233] Dolar notes that "the source of the voice can never be seen, it stems from an undisclosed and structurally concealed interior, it cannot possibly match what we can see." Ibid., 70.
[234] Ibid., 63.

the ventriloquist is only thrown a short distance, the artistry unmistakably demonstrates the complex ramifications of the relation and not least the detachment of voice and body. That is to say, although the unassigned voice always implies a body, the association between voice and body remains troublesome.

Philosopher Slavoj Zizek, whom Dolar refers to, sees in the body-voice relation a fundamental divide: "The voice displays a spectral autonomy, it never quite belongs to the body we see (...) it is as if the speaker's own voice hollows him out and in a sense speaks “by itself,” through him."[235] Zizek's conception of the voice speaking "by itself" is further developed by Connor, who is able to demonstrate an association between the artistry of ventriloquism and "the opening of the individual self to other voices and resonances; a conception of the supreme, almost demonic, power of the ventriloquist."[236] Like the human medium of spiritualism, who channels the voices of spirits, the ventriloquist too was believed to be in collusion with powers beyond this world. The character of this complicity was, however, ambiguous, because while the ventriloquist was deemed powerful owing to this relation, he was also associated with a more passive channelling of or surrendering to voices—like a switchboard operator who facilitates a connection.[237]

Technology is not just an apt metaphor for the human medium. Spiritualist communities in the second half of the 19th and early 20th centuries were quick to harness burgeoning communication and recording technologies to their efforts to transmit spirit voices. The technique of making spirit voices audible, which until then had been harboured in the human body, was replaced by technological media such as the telegraph, telephone and phonograph[238], as well as the radio and tape recorder.[239] This association between ventriloquists and spiritualists, on account of voices speaking through impalpable bodies, summons Derrida back to centre stage. We are, it would seem, dealing with a rampant disjointedness; with bodies and (technological) media that channel voices from other times and places, a virtual haunting of bodies and times. By telling the anecdote about the ventriloquist before the beginning of the performance, Olsson can be said to invoke a spectral temporality, a certain Derridian politics of memory, of the archive and of history.

The inherent difficulty of Derrida's politics of memory—which in short comes down to speaking to spectres—is not only how one goes about doing it, but also that this deed is

[235] Ibid., 70.
[236] Connor, *Dumbstruck*, 297.
[237] Ibid., 297; 370.
[238] Ibid., 363–364.
[239] Ibid., 374–375.

ultimately deferred to the future. It is the scholar of the future who will truly be able to speak to ghosts, who will enable the ghosts to come back alive "as *revenants* who would no longer be *revenants*."[240] In our non-contemporaneous present, the ghosts appear before us, unfathomable and unnameable, and deliver a promise: one day all this will be known. But for now they are bewildering to us. They compromise our notion of knowledge; they uncouple knowledge from what is known, or what we think we know "by the name of knowledge."[241] So to claim knowledge, which Rogoff talks about, is certainly a complex matter, not least in Olsson's case. Because he not only takes the stage, he has announced beforehand through the title of his performance that what he has to say is about cultural history, about the last 50 years of DR P3. We, the audience, therefore expect him to map out some conception of the past in the performance. In the wake of the unravelling of the exergue discussed above, I will, however, argue that Olsson modifies this intention at the very beginning of his performance by bringing up the ventriloquist. He does not deny the announced engagement with history, but he alerts us without telling us directly: to surrender your voice to someone or something else, or indeed to summon the voices of the past is a complicated endeavour, and it will not provide us with knowledge as we know it.

The Difficulties of Having Something to Say

There is, in fact, one single moment during the entire performance tour in which Olsson specifically addresses the expectations of the audience and the act of claiming knowledge. It happens at the premiere at DR's Studio 4 in Copenhagen, at a place where the audience in attendance are surely more knowledgeable of DR P3 than anywhere else in the country.[242] During the tour, Olsson would often, at the beginning of the performance, explain to the audience that what he does is performance art and what that might entail. But at DR's Studio 4, unlike the remainder of the performance tour, Olsson also said: "It is not a lecture, it's a performance, so you might not feel that you get any information at all."[243] Now, Olsson may just have uttered this sentence on account of opening night nervousness, and I do feel slightly treacherous in singling out this one-off comment from the accumulated reiterations of scripted and improvised performance. But I believe that this comment speaks to the issue at

[240] Derrida, *Specters of Marx*, 220.
[241] Ibid., 5.
[242] There were quite a few DR employees in the audience that evening.
[243] The explanation regarding performance art was unscripted but recurrent in all performances during the tour. The bit about the performance not being a lecture and that it might not provide the audience with any information was, however, specific to the premiere.

hand—to the difficulties of having something to say and the significance of how this something is conveyed.

What Olsson says is first of all this: I am a performance artist—don't expect me to disseminate precise information, or that you might leave this performance more knowledgeable about DR P3 than when you came. While the setting might resemble that of a lecture—the lectern, the microphone, the immaculately dressed speaker, and the seated audience—it is a performance that makes no claim to truth. What Olsson addresses in the above quoted sentence is, in other words, the informative qualities of his performance; the audience should not take the title of his performance too literally—they will be disappointed if they expect to learn DR P3 history proper. Olsson is not in the information business, and he is not a regular kind of historian. Rather, how he engages with this subject matter is closer to that of a storyteller, as I discussed earlier, and storytelling, Benjamin argues, "does not aim to convey the pure essence of the thing, like information or a report,"[244] in fact, "half the art of storytelling [is] to keep a story free from explanation as one reproduces it."[245] For this reason, the format of the lecture—an educational presentation that aims to enlighten the audience on a given subject—will of course not suffice.[246]

By distinguishing so decidedly between a lecture and a performance, it is, furthermore, tempting to assume that Olsson also discreetly hints at the notion of a lecture performance, a term that he usually avoids when speaking about his practice.[247] The fact of the matter is, however, that what Olsson does corresponds quite affirmatively with how the lecture performance has been defined, as something that thematises "the relationship between art and knowledge, respectively research, as well as art and its mediation,"[248] or more specifically, something that frustrates the status of information and performs “an intrinsic

[244] Benjamin, “The Storyteller,” 91.
[245] Ibid., 89.
[246] By steering clear of information, Olsson is of course not renouncing knowledge altogether, but he has little if any interest in verifiability. On this matter too, Olsson’s practice is reminiscent of Benjamin’s storyteller; in fact, Benjamin discerns that this new form of communication, i.e. information, threatens the art of storytelling. (The essay is from 1936). He writes: “Every morning brings us the news of the globe, and yet we are poor in noteworthy stories. This is because no event any longer comes to us without already being shot through with explanation. In other words, by now almost nothing that happens benefits storytelling; almost everything benefits information.” Ibid.
[247] For example, his homepage states in bold, red lettering in the *About* section: "Olof Olsson makes spoken performances, like lectures, speeches, comedy, talk-shows, and question-and-answer sessions. Or, rather, something in-between, or not quite." The word "like" bears some significance here, I would argue, and the fact that he settles on an in-betweenness of genre, referring to what he does as "spoken performances" indicates that he is not inclined to pigeonhole his performance practice. Olof Olsson, "ABOUT | Olof Olsson," accessed December 5, 2014, http://www.olof.cc/?page_id=131.
[248] Fiona Geuss, “Lecture Performance,” The Public School, January 9, 2011, http://thepublicschool.org/node/3084.

interrogation of what constitutes knowing"[249]—to mention but a few characteristics of the lecture performance. But one thing is performatively engaging in such epistemically unsettling activities; another is pinning down these endeavours as a format, a genre even. Not that designating something necessarily means that we have figured it out; often we give names to things or occurrences in order to be able to address them and begin to figure them out. Etymologically, however, by terming something we are also denoting a limit, we are arresting whatever it is we term, and, significantly, bringing it to an end.[250] There is, in other words, a slippage between terming and terminating. Consequently, terming something a lecture performance in a certain sense contradicts what epistemically distinguishes such practices, that is, the frustrating of information and the questioning of what constitutes knowing, as Rike Frank has phrased it. Or, put differently, by terming something a lecture performance, we are in a certain sense incapacitating its subversive potentiality. Of course, by saying, "it's a performance," Olsson is indeed designating what he does, but while performance has specific denotations within art history,[251] it remains a general, even generic, form of expression that designates an array of artistic expressions conditioned by the live presence of the artist's body in time and space in front of an audience.[252]

Stop and Erase, Rewind and Fast Forward

Returning to the affiliation between the human body, ventriloquism, spiritualist mediums and analogue technology outlined above, the engagement with history that we can ascribe to Olsson seems to be of a rather compliant nature. Taken together, the ventriloquist's puppet, the spiritualist medium and their technological counterparts are but abiding vehicles that submissively channel the transmitted voices. At this point I would like to once again turn to the record of East German comedians that Olsson introduces towards the end of the

[249] Frank, "When Form Starts Talking," 8.
[250] *OED Online,* s.v. "term, v." accessed December 6 2014. Oxford University Press. http://www.oed.com.
[251] In an art historical perspective, performance art, as a genre, came out of the conceptual strategies of the late-1960s and 1970s, according to art historian Roselee Goldberg, who, however, traces precursors of performance art back to the cabarets and soirees of the dadaists and futurists in the early 20th century. Roselee Goldberg, "The Art of Ideas and the Media Generation 1968 to 1986," in *Performance Art: From Futurism to the Present* (New York: H.N. Abrams, 1988), 152–171. The artists that engaged in performance art in the late-1960s and early 1970s had backgrounds in poetry, music, dance, painting, sculpture and theatre, and performance art is, for this reason, many things: from large-scale multi-media events for large audiences to small acts performed in front of very few people or random bypasses.
[252] Performance studies scholar Peggy Phelan has famously articulated the significance of presence to performance: "Performance's only life is in the present. Performance cannot be saved, recorded, documented, or otherwise participate in the circulation of representations of representations: once it does so, it becomes something other than performance." Peggy Phelan, *Unmarked: The Politics of Performance* (London; New York: Routledge, 1993), 146. This point, of course, fundamentally influences Olsson's work and how we are able to experience it after the fact.

performance. It can, I believe, open up our understanding of the significance of mediums and media in the context of his performance, and it can specify what sort of agency we can ascribe to Olsson. As I described earlier in this chapter, this vinyl record plays an essential part in Olsson's performance, but what I did not mention then is that while Olsson shows the cover of the vinyl record to the audience, he does not actually play the vinyl record on stage. Instead, he has copied the content of the vinyl record onto a cassette tape, which he plays through a Fisher Price children's karaoke tape recorder. This is, he asserts, a safeguard against the possibly perilous influence a totalitarian funky announcer might have on the audience.[253] This portable and colourful tape recorder, which Olsson amplifies by pointing its loudspeaker towards his microphone, certainly has a conciliatory effect. But it is the change of media from vinyl record to cassette tape that makes all the difference if we look to media theorist Friedrich Kittler.

3.7: Olof Olsson: still from documentation video of *DR P3. 1963-2013. 50 Years of Danish State Authorised Pop Radio,* 2013. Kunsthal Nord, Aalborg. Courtesy of the artist.

[253] As I described earlier, Olsson was himself exposed to a totalitarian regime at the age of 8 months—his parents even met in Mallorca at a time when Spain was a fascist totalitarian state. These occurrences have, it would seem, made him acutely aware of any such influences.

Kittler makes an interesting distinction between the record and the cassette tape. He argues that while "records are mass storage without working memory",[254] cassette recorders "have buttons with the labels of Stop and Erase, Rewind and Fast Forward."[255] In other words, the vinyl record constitutes simple sequential storage and transferral without any editing possibilities. We can of course happen to scratch a vinyl record unintentionally, and the pickup will, each time the record is played, wear down the groove a little more, eventually making the record unplayable. But the vinyl record has no inherent working memory;[256] we cannot modify its content. With the tape recorder, on the other hand, comes a number of editing possibilities. We are not just at the mercy of the transmitting medium, we can edit, even erase, the content of the tape—and in the case of Olsson's children's karaoke tape recorder there is also the option of recording, all of which gives Olsson a number of editing possibilities. By transferring the East German funky voice from the vinyl record to the cassette tape, Olsson demonstrates his ability to influence this past recording, and he is therefore in full control of what is transmitted through the loudspeaker. I would argue that Olsson's introduction of the tape recorder constitutes a transformation of how we can understand the politics of memory envisaged by the exergue. The children's karaoke tape recorder is not a submissive medium of past voices like the mediums, both human and non-human, that have been lined up above. Rather, unlike a record player, the tape recorder enforces the authority of the medium. So while the ventriloquist anecdote might lead us to believe that the memory practice in question is of a submissive nature, the transfer from record to cassette tape tells us otherwise.

It is vital to take note of the fact that Kittler's method of organising memory is that of a "cold conceptuality" of computing rather than an invocation of Mnemosyne, as he specifically asserts.[257] He is well aware of the association between spiritualism and technology; he argues that "the realm of the dead is as extensive as the storage and transmission capabilities of a given culture", and declares that media—that is devices such tape recorders and record players—"always already provide the appearances of specters."[258]

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[254] Friedrich Kittler, "Memories Are Made of You," in *Lost in the Archives*, ed. Rebecca Comay (Toronto, ON: Alphabet City Media, 2002), 413.
[255] Ibid., 414.
[256] In a similar fashion, the spiritualist medium aspired to be a neutral vehicle of spirit voices. Connor quotes an excerpt from a 1930 issue of a magazine on the direct voice in which the author acknowledges that the medium's personality might 'colour' the spirit voices. This would, however, only influence the manner in which spirit voices were conveyed, and not the actual content. Connor, *Dumbstruck*, 366.
[257] Kittler, "Memories Are Made of You," 406.
[258] Friedrich Kittler, *Gramophone, Film, Typewriter*, Writing Science (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1999), 12–13.

But the association between Kittler's characterisation of the tape recorder and a memory practice is one that I am making: If the children's karaoke tape recorder ascribes agency to the medium through a working memory, we can, by the same token, ascribe an equally dynamic memory practice to Olsson. In other words, what I am proposing here is that we read Olsson's change of medium from vinyl record to cassette tape as an allegorical gesture, as a comment on his engagement with the past. The ventriloquist anecdote may indicate that we are at the mercy of voices that speak to us and through us from other times and places, but the children's karaoke tape recorder suggests that rather than merely channelling voices of the past Olsson is able to edit them—he may even produce voices of his own on account of the tape recorder's record function. Olsson does not merely perform the playback of a vinyl record; he is a fully operational tape recorder.

The Workings of Time featuring an Alien Anthropologist

I would like to wrap up this chapter by bringing up one last instance from Olsson's performance. For while Olsson, on account of the temporalities that this chapter has developed—that of the flash and that of the spectre—appears to be preoccupied with time and how the past can become available to us, his initial idea for the performance would seem to testify to a different inclination. About halfway through the performance—just before he introduces the vinyl record of East German comedians—Olsson relates to the audience how he would have liked to approach the DR Archive:

> Imagine a civilisation on another planet, in another solar system, / vastly more advanced, / sophisticated / and civilised than ours. / Imagine an anthropologist / from that planet, / visiting Denmark. / Imagine that anthropologist / having the ability to pick up the Danish language / and the Danish social codes — / within just a few days. / And our intergalactic anthropologist / moves around among the Danes, / and listens to their thoughts and stories, / and tries to draw conclusions about life in Denmark. / Then suddenly, / in a taxi, / our anthropologist happens to hear radio — / DR P3, / the pop channel of / the Danish National Public broadcasting service. / Our anthropologist finds DR P3 very confusing. / Because, / on the planet of the anthropologist, / there's no communication through pictures or sound. / There's just a *neural cloud*, / which everyone is hooked up to — / permanently. / And everyone has the ability to understand / the thoughts and feelings / of all the other people / all the time — / one hundred percent. / There are no crying children. / Because there are no children feeling misunderstood. / And there's no rock 'n' roll. / Because there's no frustration. / So the idea of radio, / blurting out *something* — / *someone* might want to listen to, / but just might — / Is / to this anthropologist / very far-fetched.
>
> While the music on DR P3 is rather frightening, / it's the *speech in-between* that's truly confusing. / Because of all the Danes / our anthropologist has met, / no one has spoken like that. / And our intergalactic anthropologist wonders: / *what kind of a human would address another human / in such a manner?* / And / *what kind of a human would want to be addressed / in such a manner?* / Or is this kind of speech a world of its own? / A separate nation / of expressive voices / without bodies, / addressing only each other? /[pause] / And then the anthropologist enters another taxi, / which plays

> *the Voice*, / one of the commercial stations / and that — / of course — / brings on / even bigger amazement. / [pause]
>
> Tonight / I would have wanted to be that intergalactic anthropologist. / And I would have wanted to penetrate / as far as possible / into the mystery / of the funky speech / on DR P3.[259]

In his dealings with the funky voice on DR P3, Olsson would have liked to be an intergalactic anthropologist from another solar system, from a planet on which there is no language, no media, and no communication other than via a neural cloud through which everything—every thought and feeling—is instantly conveyed. The inhabitants of this distant and infinitely more advanced civilisation would be permanently and neurally in sync with each other, rendering any sort of communication or representation redundant. Making a field trip to earth, the intergalactic anthropologist visits Denmark, and here he is exposed to the confounding phenomena of speech-in-between the songs on popular music radio channels. From this story we can gather that Olsson, in order to truly scrutinise the funky voice on DR P3, reckons that he would need to not only rid himself of his bias and acculturated deafness when it comes to actually hearing the eccentricities of popular radio lingo, but also to peruse as if for the first time the notion of a medium. In other words, examining this funky, outlandish form of communication, Olsson would need to become an alien himself.

Due to the dispute with the DR Sales department, Olsson was, as we know, unable to conduct this alienating investigation, so instead of a demystification of the funky speech on DR P3, we get the curious tale about an alien anthropologist. Unlike the other figures populating Olsson's performance—the collector, the storyteller, and the historian—the alien anthropologist would seem to be unable to contribute to, let alone become absorbed by, the work of the performance. Olsson does, after all, tell the story about the alien anthropologist because he has been unable to put this exemplary extraterrestrial objectivity to work, and it becomes instead a mere memento of what could have been. Or is the story about the alien anthropologist simply a rhetorical conceit, a jest-like digression by this performance artist-cum-comedian, discreetly indulging in a little meta-amusement?[260] Might this alien anthropologist already be at work in the performance, not as an engagement with time but as a comic relief, poking fun at the complacency of the habitual? More than an idle time travelling inquisitor of funky voices, perhaps the alien anthropologist is in fact working the performance and the audience, and has been doing so from the very beginning?

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[259] Olsson, *P3 Script 4 Horsens*, 17-19.
[260] Simon Critchley writes that humour "is a practice that gives us an alien perspective on our practices. It lets us view the world as if we had just landed from another planet. The comedian is the anthropologist of the humdrum of everyday lives." Critchley, *On Humour*, 66.

Having said that, I have no doubt that Olsson truly would have wanted to engage with the funky voices on DR P3, but he never got the chance to investigate what he calls "a separate nation / of expressive voices / without bodies, / addressing only each other" on Danish popular radio. However, as described in the latter part of this chapter, Olsson's performance can be said to evoke such an array of disembodied voices itself. They may not be as funky as the radio hosts on DR P3 or The Voice, nor are they blaring from the car radios of every taxicab for that matter, but Olsson evokes them every time he takes the stage during his performance tour. They populate the stage with him and resonate throughout the performance, producing a spectral presence. So, although Olsson was unable to conduct his intended interrogation of the funky lingo of DR P3 radio hosts, his performance still summons and channels a host of voices.

When compared, this spectral temporality is quite different from the flashes of the past that Olsson—like Benjamin's historian—can be said to produce. While both hinge on notions of messianism, they are not two expressions of the same idea[261]—the difference, simplified and summarised—depends upon when the messianic event occurs. Benjamin's weak messianism can in principle take place at any present moment that forms a constellation with a past moment, while Derrida's notion of the messianic without messianism, on the other hand, is always deferred to the future. What these two notions of the messianic nonetheless have in common is that they both disrupt the linear model of time;[262] the presence of Olsson's performance is, as this chapter has shown, not synchronous with itself. It is ruptured by fragments of the past, by voices marginalised by history, and effectively haunted by a spectral presence before it even begins.

[261] Owen Ware, "Dialectic of the Past / Disjuncture of the Future: Derrida and Benjamin on the Concept of Messianism," *Journal for Cultural and Religious Theory.* 5, no. 2 (Spring 2004): 99–101.
[262] Ibid., 105.

4. Working Commissions: A Curatorial Research Configuration

In this last chapter I would like to return to my curatorial practice, specifically the act of commissioning, which constitutes my mode of inquiry into the DR Archive. While the DR Archive is certainly an intriguing framework for a research project, it is also an inherently difficult and contested thing to engage with; it is, quite frankly, something that I would rather not do on my own. So by commissioning Dahlberg and Olsson to engage with the DR Archive and produce artworks in relation to it, I am also establishing a collaborative set-up; specifically, I am rounding up an inquisitive get-together along the lines of Latour's analytical manoeuvre. The commission designates the DR Archive as a matter of concern, and in this sense it is fundamentally a research design; it is a way to set up a diverse inquiry and to approach the DR Archive from different perspectives.

The principal argument of this chapter is that the commission can be considered a response to a need, because by commissioning Dahlberg and Olsson I charge them with a specific undertaking, and in doing so I also acknowledge and designate a need for a certain kind of work to be done. The aim here is therefore to develop the commission as a mode of inquiry and to explicate methodological implications from my curatorial operations. The chapter unfolds in three parts structured around the act of commissioning, the relations established by the commission, and the workings of the commission. In the first part, I unpack the basic curatorial operations that condition the project and proceed to expand upon and conceptualise the act of commissioning. This explication enables me to sketch out a simple diagram of the commission in the second part of the chapter, which maps out the relations of curator, DR Archive, artists, and (the prospect of) artworks that the commission establishes. And in the third part of the chapter, I develop the workings of the commission with respect to my relation to the artists and the DR Archive; specifically I propose that the notion of curatorial care can be recast and modelled on Derrida's concept of the supplement.

I conclude the chapter by discussing the commission in the broader context of a co-operation, which emphasises the notion of working together and mutually benefiting from

it.[263] The purpose of this chapter is, in other words, not to give a detailed, empirical account of my processes with the artists, but to explicate the structures of our collaboration, to explore the commission as a research methodology after the fact, and to think through my curatorial position as an assiduous operator.

The Distributed Agency of Selecting

Earlier, I argued that on account of digital media an archival mode of operation has pervaded how we work today,[264] and not least how artists work. This also holds true for the curator, who, however, has been employing another archival mode of operation for much longer, namely that of selecting. According to art historian Dorothea von Hantelmann, selecting is at the core of the curator's practice,[265] and while curating includes numerous other activities and tasks, selection is where it all starts.[266] Selection would indeed seem to be a significant and powerful act; without selection there would be very few exhibitions and, as a consequence, very little art history, because most exhibitions are the result of some sort of selection process, and what gains visibility and prominence in exhibitions becomes in turn the stuff of art history (or vice-versa in the case of retrospective exhibitions). To this end, the work of the curator has been compared to that of a gatekeeper, who allows some objects to enter into an exhibition, while leaving others outside, condemning them to oblivion.[267] As the curator selects and makes visible some artists and artworks, innumerable other artists and artworks

[263] I draw here on Maria Lind's description of *co-operation* in Maria Lind, "Complications; On Collaboration, Agency and Contemporary Art," in New Communities, ed. Nina Möntmann (Toronto, Ont.: Public Books, 2009), 54.
[264] As I touched upon in the Introduction, this *we* that operates in an archival fashion covers quite a wide span today and includes not only artists (see Roelstraete, "Field Notes", 21), but also curators, as I argue here, and a whole range of professions and practices concerned with popular archives, as Appadurai has asserted, see Appadurai, "Archive and Aspiration", 16.
[265] Selection as a curatorial mode of operation hinges not only on the transformation of the role of the curator and the emergence of the independent curator—spearheaded, one might say, by Harald Szeemann, who made the exhibition "a medium that included elements of personal expression," in the 1960s and onwards. Hantelmann argues that the 'art' of choosing is also emblematic of the affluence of the society emerging in North America in the 1950s and Western Europe in the 1960s, in which selecting became a cultural practice in itself. Dorothea von Hantelmann, "Affluence and Choice. The Social Significance of the Curatorial," in *Cultures of the Curatorial*, ed. Beatrice von Bismarck, Jörn Schafaff, and Thomas Weski (Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2012) 43-44.
[266] In a broader cultural realm, curating has practically become synonymous with any act of selecting. As New York Times noted in 2009: "The word "curate," lofty and once rarely spoken outside exhibition corridors or British parishes, has become a fashionable code word among the aesthetically minded, who seem to paste it onto any activity that involves culling and selecting." The article lists examples of websites curating their merchandise, a nightclub curating "a night of Curious burlesque," and the Brooklyn Flea even curates their food stands. Alex Williams, "On the Tip of the Creative Tongues," NYTimes.com, October 2, 2009, http://www.nytimes.com/2009/10/04 /fashion/04curate.html?pagewanted=all.
[267] Buden, "Towards the Heterosphere," 30.

are left behind. Boris Buden states that the curator "pushes a huge amount of artistic and cultural value forward into the light. But at the same time she leaves a far bigger pile of artistic and cultural scrap behind, denying it a voice and thus shrouding it in darkness."[268] That is to say, to select always designates a border, a demarcation between inside and outside.

There is no doubt that my selection of Dahlberg and Olsson is of crucial importance to this project, and by choosing to work with them, I give them precedence over all other artists, who—as an inevitable consequence—I come to disregard. But when it comes to actualising my selection of Dahlberg and Olsson, the power relations are not as clear-cut. Following a process of research, studio visits, conversations, and thorough consideration, I decide to work Dahlberg and Olsson, but this decision is, of course, not mine alone. In fact, my selection does not hold much sway before I approach Dahlberg and Olsson and present them with the project.[269] What I am getting at here is that the realisation of my selection hinges on the agency of someone else;[270] the artists could say no—it is after all a very specific project that I want them to become part of.[271] In other words, by disclosing my selection to the artists, I also extend to them the power to accept or decline my approach. This does not, however, negate the curatorial prerogative to select one artist over another; but the power to actualise my selection of Dahlberg and Olsson is one that I have to share.

Now, as I have mentioned on several occasions throughout this thesis, I approached Dahlberg and Olsson by commissioning them. But before I get to the commission, let me elaborate a little on the invitation, because the distinction between the two is indeed a grey area—especially in practice—and they are both conditioned by having someone to address, and in order to be fulfilled they depend on an affirmative answer. If we start with the etymology, 'to invite' means to ask someone kindly to come to a place or proceeding, which

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[268] Ibid. 31-32.

[269] There are circumstances in which the curator's selection is inclined to be more assertive, for example when a museum curator selects works from the museum collection to put on display.

[270] To this end, the curator's selection differs distinctively from the cultural practice of selecting that Hantelmann discusses. In a society characterised by affluence, the cultural practice of selecting, I would argue, pivots to a large extent on the financial capacity to purchase the selected item.

[271] A lot of factors, of course, play a part in the decision as to whether to accept or decline an approach from a curator. The nature of the proposed project is quite possibly the most important factor, but institutional affiliations, seniority of the curator and artist in question, scheduling, budget size etc. also enter into the equation. Even so, I would argue that on account of the prominence of the curator in today's art world as well as the possibility of working and (perhaps) getting paid, artists are likely to say yes when approached by a curator. I did, however, experience that two artists withdrew from this project; one did it due to practical circumstances of a personal nature, and the other because she came to realise that her work had taken a turn towards abstraction, which made the DR Archive an awkward point of reference. I remark on this merely to point out the fact that the artist-curator relation is defined by flexible and reversible power relations—something that has been quite pronounced in this project.

the invitee is presumed to be pleased or willing to attend.[272] The Latin root of invitation, *invitatio*, means incitement or challenge,[273] so the invitation also involves the prospect of a dare, and if *inviting* is, furthermore, equivalent to "making time" in Hebrew,[274] the gesture also induces a commitment to carve out time in a perhaps busy schedule in order to meet the invitation. So etymologically, it would seem, the invitation pertains to a specific place or proceeding; it may challenge, even incite, the invitee and could have temporal implications.

In (art) practice, the notion of an invitation has quite a wide span; it can be formalised in a letter or an e-mail that invites an artist to be part of an exhibition for example, or it may rely on an informal remark along the lines of "we should work together some day" at the end of an interesting conversation (and it can of course be proposed both by a curator and an artist). The actual distinction between a commission and an invitation—especially if the latter involves the production of a new work—is, however, difficult to pin down. As I describe in more detail below, the commission too adheres to a specific place or context, but whereas the invitation in a convivial manner may encourage or challenge, the commission stipulates that the artist carry out a certain task. At least so the etymology tells us. But the question is whether in principle we ought to call all invitations to produce new works 'commissions'? Because are there not always a number of stipulations in place, for example, the size of the budget, or the location, theme, scope, or format of the event or exhibition that the production of a new work would have to adhere to? [275] That is, unless of course the invitation is, first and foremost, an invitation to collaborate and develop a project together, which is how the British organisation Artangel describes their collaborations with artists. However, Artangel nonetheless call what they do 'commissions'.[276] While my project with Dahlberg and Olsson of course also is a collaboration, it revolves around a very specific task, and for that reason I

[272] *OED Online,* s.v. "invite, v." accessed September 2014. Oxford University Press. http://www.oed.com.
[273] *An Elementary Latin Dictionary*, s.v. "invitatio" by Charlton, T. Lewis, accessed October 27, 2014 (New York, Cincinnati, and Chicago: American Book Company, 1890) http://www.perseus.tufts.edu.
[274] So Anne Dufourmantelle speculates in her invitation to Derrida, an invitation that originates in a response, namely Derrida's seminars on hospitality. Jacques Derrida and Anne Dufourmantelle, *Of Hospitality* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2000) 76.
[275] Needless to say, inviting an artist to participate in an exhibition with an already existing artwork also pertains to a specific place or proceeding, but here the artwork already exists, that is, the stipulations in place cannot influence the work as such, only its presentation, mediation and contextualisation.
[276] For example, in the foreword to the publication, *Off Limits, 40 Artangel Projects,* Marina Warner argues that Artangel gives "artists the freedom to make art the way they would if nobody owned them or directed them or wanted to tell them the story in a certain way, to meet sponsors' ambitions or the state's civic purposes." Marina Warner, "Foreword," in *Off Limits: 40 Artangel Projects*, ed. Gerrie van Noord (London; New York: Artangel: Merrell, 2002) 8. In addition, on their webpage, Artangel likewise describe their practice of commissioning as very open and apparently without any preconceived stipulations: "Each new project evolves from a singular commissioning process, born from an open-ended conversation with an artist offered the opportunity to imagine something extraordinary." http://www.artangel.org.uk/about_us (accessed September 20, 2014).

term it a commission.

A Commission in Need is a Commission Indeed

There is nothing new about art commissions; hiring and paying an artist to produce an artwork for a specific context or purpose goes back many centuries, and while the conditions of the art commission have changed considerably over time,[277] it remains prevalent today. The most common, contemporary form of the art commission is probably the public art commission, often initiated and supported by government bodies,[278] organisations,[279] institutions,[280] or foundations,[281] but commissions instigated by individuals for private collections are also widespread. Some aspects of the commission have been explored and discussed in publications, for example the significance of site in Miwon Kwon's essay "One Place After Another: Notes on Site Specificity,"[282] from 1997; the emergence of durational processes in *Locating the Producers: Durational Approaches to Public Art*[283] from 2010, edited by Paul O'Neill and Claire Doherty; and in the book *Commissioning Contemporary Art. A Handbook for Curators, Collectors, and Artists,* Louisa Buck and Daniel McClean provide a comprehensive introduction to the history and practices of commissioning. What I am interested in here is, however, the workings of the act of commissioning and its ramifications; why we commission, what it means to commission, and what is made possible by the act of commissioning. To my knowledge, there are no such conceptualisations of the act of commissioning around, which is curious considering its ongoing prevalence and

[277] Traceable all the way back to the Ancient Greeks, commissioning testifies to a history of dependence between artists and patrons during which artists' livelihoods were entirely dependent on patronage and artworks were primarily produced on commission. With the emergence of new social forms in the 19th century, the patronal relation gradually became less influential on account of a growing art market and the introduction of a new group of intermediaries such as dealers, agents, critics, and later gallerists and curators. Louisa Buck and Daniel Mcclean, *Commissioning Contemporary Art. A Handbook for Curators, Collectors, and Artists* (New York, NY: Thames & Hudson, 2012) 22, and Jonathan Harris, Art History: The Key Concepts (London; New York: Routledge, 2006), 229.

[278] Many countries have "percent for art" programmes, which require public sector bodies to devote a small percentage of construction or refurbishment budgets to commission artists to produce artworks specifically for the site in question. (Ibid. 43.) Denmark has such a policy referred to as the 1% rule for art in new public buildings, and The Danish Arts Foundation also supports art commissions for public spaces.

[279] For example non-profit organisations like Creative Time in the US, see http://creativetime.org or Artangel in the UK, see http://www.artangel.org.uk.

[280] As I have mentioned previously, any invitation of an artist to produce a new work can in principle be considered a commission, so the examples are countless.

[281] One example among many is the Dia Art Foundation, see http://www.diaart.org.

[282] Kwon's focus is site-specific or—as she prefers to term it—site-oriented art, a term she uses in order to recognise and emphasise the impermanent, unrepeatable and fleeting nature of contemporary art practices. Miwon Kwon, "One Place After Another: Notes on Site Specificity," *October* 80, no. Spring (1997): 91.

[283] The book explores how durational processes to public art curating and commissioning have emerged as an alternative to nomadic, itinerant and short-term approaches in recent years. Paul O'Neill and Clarie Doherty, eds., *Locating the Producers* (Amsterdam: Valiz, 2010).

significance on the art scene.[284] In the following, I will therefore attempt to sketch out an understanding of the act of commissioning in order to establish the implications of my curatorial mode of address within the context of this project.

Beginning again with the word, I realise that the etymology cannot account for everything that has ever been termed a commission, but the word, at least, can give us some indication as to the meaning and potential of the act of commissioning. A commission references the act of "giving in charge" or "entrusting,"[285] that is, it is not only an act of charging someone with a task but also a matter of entrusting someone to carry out this task. Furthermore, to commission also means to give authority to act, to empower, and to authorise with an office or duty,[286] that is, the commissioner enables and empowers the artist to work, but this license is also decidedly restrictive. The authorisation is equally a charge to act in a prescribed manner, to execute a particular kind of work, and for the artists to commit to this task.[287] There are, in other words, several drives at work in the commission, drives that charge, entrust, and empower someone with a task—and notably—with a rather specific one.

Now, we might ask what possesses us to commission an artwork in the first place, because due to the specificity of the task, there ought to be an equally specific reason for it. I would like to propose that we consider the commission of an artwork a reaction to a *need*[288]—not in the sense of deprivation but rather as an exigency and a want. To specify, the need in question is not only a practical need; it also translates as a motivation or a drive, as an impulse to pursue a particular goal, but, crucially, a goal that the commissioner cannot achieve without the help of someone else. To this end, commissioning testifies to an ability to identify a need, to recognise this need as a potentiality, and to extend the task of pursuing this potentiality to someone else. Accordingly, a commission is conditioned by a certain incompleteness or wanting; a public space or building, an exhibition, an art collection, or—as is the case here—an archive, is in need of something. The public commissioner

[284] Buck and Mcclean, for example, note that commissions in many cases "enable artists to create ambitious works that might not otherwise be possible." Buch and Mcclean, *Commissioning Contemporary Art*, 56.
[285] *OED Online, s.v.* "commission, n.1", accessed April 7, 2014. Oxford University Press. http://www.oed.com
[286] Ibid., s.v. "commission, v." accessed June 1, 2014.
[287] Ibid., s.v. "commission, n.1."
[288] In the foreword to *Creative Time: The Book,* president and artistic director Anne Pasternak argues that most public art projects emerge from a public need or opportunity, "i.e. the community wants art to uplift a public site, the government mandates that new parks and buildings have art to revitalize a community or attract tourism and commerce." However, Creative Time's projects, Pasternak asserts, do not respond to such needs but "grow directly from the desires of artists and we privilege their ideas and processes." Anne Pasternak, "Foreword," in *Creative Time* (New York; Enfield: Princeton Architectural, 2008), 11. What I argue here is that all commissions—not just "most public art projects"—adhere to a need, but the nature of this need may be quite different depending on the project in question.

acknowledges the need for an artwork in a public space to fully realise its potential,[289] an art collector discerns in his or her collection (or in that of an art institution) a need owing to aesthetic, art historical, or speculative reasons, and an exhibition curator may too identify a need for a specific kind of work, or a work by a specific artist, in order to realise a curatorial concept or vision. Or it may even be the curatorial vision of an artist that an art institution is in need of.[290] When it comes to an archive and in particular the DR Archive, I have already, in Chapter 1, described the uncertainty and incompleteness of this *thing*, which certainly produces such a need—a demand really—for work to be done. Of course, acknowledging any of these needs has just as much to do with desire as with a closely reasoned argument, an economic scheme, or a legislative requirement. This is not solely a pragmatic affair.

Now, in most cases the commissioner's charge is only one of many constraints that define the nature of the commission. Often a host of considerations pertaining to the commission must also be taken into account, for example those of the users and producers of the site in question, its physical conditions as well as political and regulatory factors, health and safety measures, the budget, and—especially in the case of a permanent installation of an artwork—its maintenance. Furthermore, institutional constraints, for example in the form of specific administrative procedures, can also hold considerable sway. Most of these considerations are also at work in my commission of Dahlberg and Olsson to engage with the DR Archive and produce artworks in relation to it. The difference is, however, that their works never were intended to be realised in the DR Archive, but, as I have described earlier, at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Roskilde and in Olsson's case, on the road, so to speak. This circumstance, however, only pertains to the practical realisation of the commissions, and not the processes that precede the artworks. Furthermore, while Dahlberg and Olsson's artworks may take place outside the physical confines of the DR Archive, they remain contingent on it—not only in terms of how we are able to understand these works, but also how the works are able—or, more accurately, allowed—to put the DR Archive to work.[291] The order of the archive not only determines what documents are included within the archive, it also concerns how visitors can access and interact with the archival documents. An art commission is, in other words, not only defined by the charge to produce an artwork for a specific context or purpose; there are also a number of circumstantial restraints in place.

[289] This need may hinge on architectural, social, aesthetic, political, as well as jurisdictional conditions.
[290] Kwon mentions such instances involving, for example, the Maryland Historical Society that commissioned the artist Fred Wilson to reorganise their permanent collection in 1992. Kwon, "One Place After Another," 102.
[291] As I have previously described, DR's copyright regulations had direct consequences with regard to Olsson's performance.

Public art commissions are, I expect, the most restrictive, but the DR Archive certainly also musters a considerable number of impediments.

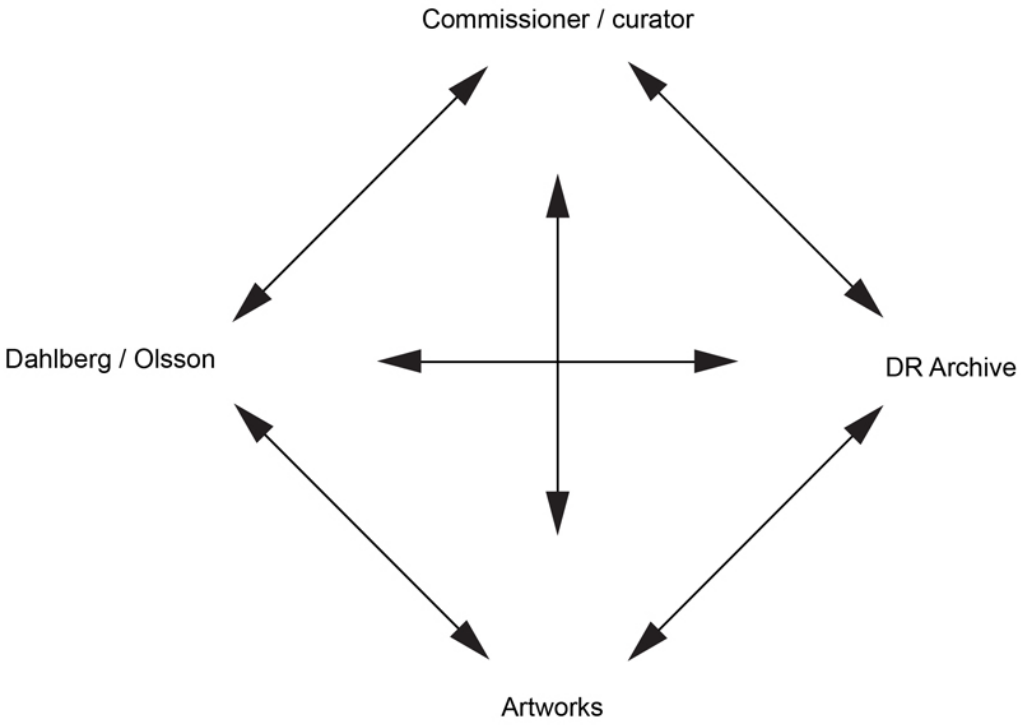
As I have discussed above, the initiation of my collaboration with Dahlberg and Olsson constitutes a manoeuvre of selecting and commissioning. As the curator, my selection of the artists for this project may to all appearances constitute the most clean-cut authoritative act of the entire process. But my selection is not realised before I approach the artists and commission them, and this act opens up a number of intricate power relations. I may be charging the artists with a specific task, but just like any other commissioner, I also depend on the artists to produce artworks that respond to the need for work that the commission actualises. What is more, due to the commission that I myself am subject to, there is an additional exigency at work; I also depend on the artists in order to realise my PhD.[292] Of course, my position as commissioner and curator also holds considerable sway. Other than the charge of commissioning, my initiative also testifies to a certain measure of power—I approach the artists—and I not only offer them an opportunity to work, but also access to an otherwise inaccessible archive, an institutional framework, a research project, a budget and a fee, and my undivided curatorial attention. All of these things of course make up a desirable framework for an artist, but they also constitute a notable curatorial leverage.

Now, in general, collaborations—or relations for that matter—are always conditioned by the relative positions and privileges of the people involved—no matter whether we really notice them or not—and a commission is likely to emphasise these power relations by establishing particular conditions for the collaboration, first and foremost the undertaking of a particular task. That said, my commission of Dahlberg and Olsson truly played out like collaborations—or co-operations—which is how Maria Lind designates "working together and mutually benefiting from it."[293] Other than the power relations that undeniably condition our co-operative efforts, my commissioning also, as etymology tells us, empowers the artists to act, and as I will argue later in this chapter, I am also empowered in my curatorial endeavours by the artists and the DR Archive.

[292] This 'double' commission is not as curious or unusual as it might seem, in fact, many commissions for public spaces are formally commissioned by a board or committee, but facilitated by a curator, who has effectively been commissioned by the commissioning agency to curate and support the artist's work. In the case of my PhD, I am of course both the commissioner and the curator of the artists, but I am also the subject of a commission extended by the LARM Research Project to engage with the DR Archive.
[293] Lind, "Complications; On Collaboration, Agency and Contemporary Art", 54.

The Commission in Particular and the Thesis in General

Having unpacked the act of commissioning, I would like to turn my attention to the configuration of DR Archive, curator, artists, and (the prospect of) artworks that the act of commissioning identifies and opens up. Plotting out these positions, the diagram below makes visible the relations that the commission puts in place.[294] I realise that by resorting to a diagram, I am in danger of over-simplifying a particular set of circumstances, but I will try to make up for the most immediate shortcomings as I proceed.[295]



4.1: Diagram of the commission.

[294] I am grateful to my friend and PhD colleague Torsten Andreasen for a number of inspiring conversations during which the diagram of the commission was developed.

[295] Although the diagram could appear to be a self-contained set of relations, they do not exist in a vacuum; all positions are also caught up in numerous other relations. Both the artists and I partake in countless institutional, collegial, art professional, and social relations, while the ensuing artworks become part of a public distribution of images and ideas that link them to social, political, and art historical contexts, and the people who visit the exhibition or attend the performances make up a critical context as they form opinions and understandings of what they see and hear. And the DR Archive, of course, is part of numerous political, cultural, and historical relations, some of which, as I have described previously, strongly influence this project. So, in addition to the relations that my commission establishes, Dahlberg, Olsson, and I also manage the cluster of relations outlined above. The specific purpose of this diagram is, however, to scrutinise the workings of the commission, and to this end it only includes the main components of this particular undertaking.

Before I go through the relations that the commission puts in place, let me first make a couple of brief comments about the diagram. First, in the diagram, I consider the commissioner and the curator to be one and the same person, because that is the case for my project; I both commission the artists and facilitate and curate the ensuing processes and realisations of their artworks.[296] And second, I realise that positioning the curator at the top of the diagram might be construed as reinforcing a sort of structural authority on the part of the curator. However, what I want to indicate with this placement is that I am the initiator and driving force behind the commission. I detect the need and potential for work to be done, and I commission the artists to engage with it, but I do of course depend on the artists realising the commission.

Now, the diagram above lays out a number of relations that have been established by the commission. As I have previously mentioned, the relation between curator and the DR Archive is conditioned by a need—a need that I am unable to satisfy on my own but that registers with me as a compulsion to act and settle the disturbance. I, in turn, select and commission the artists to engage with the DR Archive and forge hereby a relation that both charges and entrusts them with a critical undertaking that I cannot handle alone. Hence, the commission initially instigates the relation between the artists and the DR Archive, and the artists then rehearse this relation through their engagement with the archive—conditioned of course by the order of this archive. It would, however, be a mistake to assume that the DR Archive is inviolable. In fact, it is difficult to imagine how the artists' engagement with the DR Archive and their ensuing artworks will not affect it in some way or other.[297] As for the artworks, they are already prefigured by the artists' acceptance of the commission, which constitutes a promise to produce artworks and realise the commission. That is to say, as a covenant, the commission produces these veritable *pre*figurations. The artists' relation to the artworks is, in turn, crucially a process of figuring something out and in doing so substantiating a pledge. To this end, the position of the artworks in the diagram designates both the *promise* of artworks and the artworks as actually *realised* in exhibition or performance.

It goes without saying that my relation to the artworks differs from that of the artists. Strictly speaking, it pertains to the realisation of the artworks in Dahlberg's exhibition and

[296] As I have already mentioned, the realisation of a commission for public space is often facilitated by a curator, who is effectively commissioned by the commissioning agency to undertake this task. In such cases, an additional diagram can be drawn up. This is also the case with the commission that I am subject to: LARM commissions me to engage with the DR Archive; here, however, the result or goal of the commission is this thesis.

[297] There is, according to Derrida, no meta-archive, which means that any interpretation of the archive necessarily inscribes itself in the archive. Derrida, *Archive Fever*, 67.

Olsson's performance tour as well as to my interpretation of them as outlined in the chapters that have preceded this one. Because no matter how I facilitate the conception and production of the artworks, it is, of course, processed through the artists, that is the relation curator–artists–artworks as depicted in the diagram. Our respective processes come together in Dahlberg's exhibition and Olsson's performance tour, but how we get there, and how we interpret these realisations are inevitably different as indicated by our different relations to the artworks in the diagram. The relation between the artworks and the DR Archive is also forged by the act of commissioning. The artworks constitute, as I mentioned above, a substantiation of a promise and a response to the need that the commission actualises. The question is, of course, whether the artworks really are able to satisfy the DR Archive, whether we indeed can consider the artworks eligible responses to the need? This is a matter that I will return to, but on account of the commission the artworks do reflect and supplement the DR Archive. I would argue that this relation between the artworks and the DR Archive perseveres even after the commission concludes with Dahlberg's exhibition and Olsson's performance tour. I can of course revisit the relations put in place by the commission as I do in this thesis, and the artists can return to their artworks by displaying or performing them again, but the relation between the artworks and the DR Archive is not finalised with the completion of the commission. It has only just begun.

Now, other than laying out the positions and the immediate relations brought about by the commission, the diagram also brings to light a number of indirect relations owing to the commission. All positions are, as a consequence, also perspectives to engage through and to be affected by; for example, the artworks provide me with new points of entry to the DR Archive, just as the DR Archive for me becomes an entrance to the artists' work. By accepting the commission, the artists provide me with new perspectives on the DR Archive, and I also become a go-between in the artists' relation to the DR Archive. The DR Archive, furthermore, becomes a means through which I can become familiar with the artists' practices, just like the artists can become familiar with my practice by way of their engagement with the DR Archive. And all positions, the artist and me as well as the DR Archive and the artworks, are affected—transformed even—by the relations, the artworks in particular because they are produced as a consequence of the relations.

Each chapter of this thesis rehearses and scrutinises these relations in its own way. The curator–artworks–DR Archive and curator–DR Archive–artworks relations intertwine in Chapters 2 and 3, "Time and Time Again" and "The Flash and the Spectre." Relations including the artists are of course not entirely absent: I am, inescapably, influenced by the

artists in my engagement with the artworks, but the primary focus of these chapters is the relations between curator, artworks, and DR Archive. Chapter 1, "Beginnings on End," is, on the other hand, largely concerned with relations involving the positions of artists, DR Archive and curator by focusing on the DR Archive, the artists' engagement with the archive and what comes before the artworks. Therefore the position of the artworks is less significant in this chapter. And this present chapter engages with the entire configuration: with the structure it produces, what it means, and what sort of thinking is made possible by it.

The diagram is, in other words, a very useful device when it comes to determining the relations that the commission puts in place—it even maps out the structure of this thesis. But, as I mentioned in the beginning of this section on the diagram, it also relies on a simplification of practice, and *in practice*, the relations of the configuration are not as assertive and resilient as they might appear on paper. We are, after all, dealing with a matter of considerable concern here, with an archive that does not reveal itself to us, and—as I have demonstrated in Chapter 1—ultimately conveys a certain reluctance when it comes making the archival recordings available to the artists. If the commission indeed can be regarded as an analytical gesture equivalent to Latour's *thing*, and my role as a curator as being, likewise, similar to the role Latour ascribes to the critic, it is not enough for me to offer "the participants arenas in which to gather."[298] I am also someone "for whom, if something is constructed, then it means it is fragile and thus in need of great care and caution."[299] In the final section of this chapter, I will expand upon the workings of the commission as well as my role as an assiduous operator in relation to the artists and the DR Archive.

A Need for Care

The commission designates the matter of concern, the DR Archive, in a relational set-up, but, as referred to above, the configuration of curator, artists, DR Archive, and artworks is not a fail-safe mechanism. Rather, it is a precarious construction, and in order to sustain the coming together and addressing a matter of concern—in short, conducting inquiries into the DR Archive—the configuration requires care and consideration. Latour even argues that such inquisitive get-togethers are "in great need" of such assiduousness. [300] As already described in the opening pages of this thesis, the occupation of the curator pertains both etymologically and historically to caring. Furthermore, Beatrice von Bismarck and Maria Lind have both

[298] Bruno Latour, "Why Has Critique Run out of Steam?", 246.
[299] Ibid.
[300] Ibid.

characterised the work of the curator as relational, as an activity that produces (and maintains) connections[301]—something the diagram of the commission also makes apparent. So the curator certainly has the potential to mobilise and attend to these inquisitive gatherings.

The curator as someone-who-cares has, however, acquired a slightly dubious reputation in recent decades. To be specific, the curator-as-carer is associated with a certain kind of curator—one who worked "with collections out of sight of the public,"[302] in contrast with today's curator, who occupies "a more central position on a much broader stage."[303] The spotlight, it would seem, has made caring—or at least a particular kind of caring—obsolete. The kind of care that is required here—and that I am interested in—is, however, not the insipid maintenance of status quo that preoccupied the historical curator-as-carer; it is not sufficient to perform a sort of custodianship that serves to protect the pristine sanctity of the artwork. But, as suggested in the opening pages of this thesis, Foucault provides us with a very different conception of care by reinvigorating the obsolete etymological association between curiosity and care. He speaks about "the care one takes for what exists and could exist," and "a certain relentlessness to break up the familiarities and to regard otherwise the same things."[304] What we have here is, in other words, a passionate and persistent kind of care; one that seeks out new paths, cultivates possibilities, and reconfigures what we already know with a certain measure of persistence. This desire "to know more, and better, and something else"[305] that Foucault talks about is indeed an intriguing attitude—who would not want to care like that? The thing about care, and not least Foucault's take on it, is, however, that it is not enough to think about it, we have to actually do it. And when we do care, we do not do so single-handedly; we are, as Jan Verwoert has argued, empowered to care by the person or thing we care about.[306] Caring is, in other words, not a manifestation of the caregiver's power but an undertaking that we are enabled to pursue by someone or something else. This empowerment is hence conditioned by a need,[307] because why would anyone seek care if they had no need for it? And why would anyone care if nobody was in need of it—would that not be an excessive kind of care? This line of thinking indicates that if I indeed can be said to care for and through the commission, specifically for the artists' practices and

[301] Bismarck, "Curatorial Criticality," 19, and Lind, "The Curatorial," 63.
[302] O'Neill, *The Culture Of Curating And The Curating Of Culture(s)*, 9.
[303] Ibid.
[304] Foucault, "The Masked Philosopher", 305.
[305] Ibid.
[306] Jan Verwoert, "Personal Support: How to Care?", 165.
[307] Ibid.

the DR Archive, it is because there is a need for it. What is implied here is, in other words, that the artists require the assistance and care of a curator in order to work—that is, they depend on the care of a curator.

A Laughable Proposition and a Serious Rejoinder

On paper, this supposed dependence of the artists is preposterous. At least, that is literally how it is perceived in a conversation between an artist, a theorist, a curator, and a sponsor recounted (or, as is more likely, staged) by Boris Buden in the essay "The Wine Was Very Good: On the Task of the Curator."[308] The conversation goes like this: The theorist brings up Walter Benjamin's essay on "The Task of the Translator" and likens the task of the curator to that of the translator: namely, to bring a work of art to its maturity. The curator, in turn, suggests that the care evoked by the etymology of *curator* hence must resemble the way a parent cares for a child, and the artist slam-dunks the argument by proposing a new definition of the artist as a curator-lacking creature. That is, "a creature whose existence is essentially determined by its being in need of curatorial care."[309] This comment makes everyone except the theorist burst out laughing. Now, I have no intention of bringing Benjamin or the notion of translation into my argument here, and it seems reasonable to infer that this conversation pushes the point about curatorial care to extremes for the purposes of argumentative delight. But, in all seriousness, is the mere thought of curatorial care and the need that it presupposes on the part of the artist really a laughing matter? Is it so ridiculous to even consider that an artist may depend on a curator? I, for one, do not think so; I would argue that the artists do depend on me and are in need of curatorial care—I am, after all, providing them with opportunities to work and to present their artworks. There is, on the other hand, a persistent understanding of the artist as self-sufficient, which cannot and should not be ignored; the artist is of course the author of the artwork. So the question is, is it possible to come up with a way to talk about the artist-curator relationship and a curator's care, different from the way the apocryphal story of the drinking buddies above construes its unyielding binary economy? Is there a modus operandi of caring that can grasp the dependence and independence that characterise the tie between artist and curator?

What I described earlier does not quite amount to that; we have, of course, the commission that, much like Latour's inquisitive gatherings, designates a matter of concern,

[308] Boris Buden, "The Wine Was Very Good: On the Task of the Curator." In *MJ: Manifesta Journal: Journal of Contemporary Curatorship* no. 10 (2010): 5–13.
[309] Ibid., 7.

and we have an attitude, a theoretical aspiration, in Foucault's rejoining of curiosity and care. But how does care work?[310] My suggestion is this: we might consider the curator's care along the lines of how Derrida devises the concept of the supplement.[311] Can we model the workings of my curatorial care on this confounding, double-edged concept that—like an appendix to a book—substitutes an incompleteness by being added as an external adjunct? Can my curatorial care be said to substitute a need, a deficiency, and at the same time be added to something that is supposedly already complete and sufficient in itself, that is, the artists' practices? Care would then substitute a need that can be compensated—Derrida writes, "the supplement supplements. (...) It intervenes (...) *in-the-place-of*; if it fills, it is as if one fills a void."[312] That is, the artists are in need of external assistance in the form of a curator and an exhibition (for example) in order to be complete. The compensatory nature of my care is, however, troubling, because while my care can substitute the needs of the artists' practices, it may also influence them in an invasive manner[313]—it may begin to take over and define aspects of the work.[314] What makes this substitution so confounding is, moreover, that the need that my care adds to replace is in fact irreplaceable, in other words, whatever the extent of the care that substitutes it, it cannot equal the need. In this sense, my compensatory care leaves behind a new insufficiency, and so the need perseveres in a new form, requiring additional care in the form of further exhibitions and interpretations.

As a supplement, care would, however, also and at the same time be added to something that is (purportedly) self-sufficient, that is, something that is not in need of care. Or as Derrida phrases it: "The supplement adds itself, it is a surplus, a plenitude enriching another plenitude, the *fullest measure* of presence."[315] In this sense, my care can add nothing,

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[310] To clarify, as I describe above, I only use Latour's inquisitive gathering, his *thing*, to designate a matter of concern that must be cared for. Latour's rather sparse description of the workings of the care of the critic is, as I understand it, as a care that protects (Latour, "Why Has Critique Run out of Steam?", 232), an attitude that would appear to be closer to the traditional curator-as-carer than to a reinvigorated version of this role.

[311] Boris Groys has made a similar suggestion, stating "curating acts like a supplement or a "pharmacon" (in Derrida's usage)." Developing his argument, Groys, however, specifically concerns himself with the pharmacon and *curator*'s etymological tie to curing, which is an association that I am not so interested in here. Boris Groys, "On the Curatorship," in *Art Power* (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 2008), 46.

[312] Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, Corrected ed. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998), 145.

[313] Derrida's chapter on the supplement is exactly called "...That Dangerous Supplement..." Ibid., 141.

[314] Examples of such invasive behaviour have been voiced by Daniel Buren, who, in 1972, famously problematised "the exhibition of the exhibition as a work of art," as a response to Szeemann's conceptualisation of Documenta 5 and more recently, Anton Vidokle's 2010 article "Art Without Artists" contesting what he identifies as a proclivity towards undermining the agency of artists by taking the activity of the curator beyond the making of exhibitions. See Daniel Buren, "Where Are the Artists?," in *The Next Documenta Should Be Curated by an Artist*, ed. Jens Hoffmann (Frankfurt am Main ; New York : [S.l.]: Revolver, Archiv für aktuelle Kunst ; E-flux ; Platform, Garanti Contemporary Art Center, 2004), 26, and Anton Vidokle, "Art Without Artists?", *E-Flux Journal*, no. 16 (May 2010): 1.

[315] Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, 144.

because it is added to a full presence to which it is exterior, and so it spills over, amassing a presence on the outside. That is, my support of the artists' practices, my efforts to exhibit and stage their works—in short, my curatorial care—constitute a veritable add-on that enriches the self-sufficiency of the artists' practices, but only from the outside. These two meanings of the supplement coincide; Derrida writes, "each of the two significations is by turns effaced or becomes discreetly vague in the presence of the other."[316] So, as a supplement, my care at once augments the ideal sufficiency of the artists' practices, while at the same time exposing their insufficiency. Or, as Derrida has phrased this paradoxical occurrence: "Somewhere, something can be filled up *of itself,* can accomplish itself, only by allowing itself to be filled through sign and proxy."[317] In short, my care will only be added to the artists' practices as an exterior presence if the practices have an insufficiency that my care can compensate.[318]

Too Little and Too Much

Modelled on Derrida's supplement, curatorial care indeed works in mysterious ways, and it ties the artist and the curator together in a confounding relationship, one that does not deny that an artist's practice may be self-sufficient, but maintains that it always is open to something other than itself, and, as it happens, is affected by it. My curatorial care forms part of the artists' practices without being part of them, it belongs without belonging, and it is needed and unnecessary at one and the same time. Now, care as supplementary à la Derrida does not designate every single action that I perform in relation to the artists; the idea is not that this care-structure is applicable to everything I do or say around them. As I mentioned in the beginning of this chapter, my aim here is not to give a detailed, empirical account of my every move and action, but to tease out the structural workings of my curatorial operations, and to render discernible the way in which care indeed can be said to be at work in my relations with the artists and the DR Archive.

My act of commissioning the artists to engage with the DR Archive and produce artworks in relation to it can also be considered an act of supplementary care. I gather together the artists to address a matter of concern, and the outcome of these inquiries—that is, Dahlberg's exhibition and Olsson's performance tour—operate as supplements in relation to

[316] Ibid., 145.
[317] Ibid.
[318] Designating the workings of my curatorial care as supplementary could perhaps appear to turn the tables on the curatorial privilege that I mentioned earlier, but the supplement is only allegedly secondary. Supplementarity is, for Derrida, an indefinite process, and through its mediation it produces the sense of the very thing it defers: "the mirage of the thing itself, of immediate presence, of originary perception. Immediacy is derived. That all begins through the intermediary is what is indeed "inconceivable [to reason]."" Ibid., 157.

the DR Archive. In other words, I care for the DR Archive through the medium of the artists' works, that is, through the act of commissioning. Because, as I have argued above, my commission responds precisely to a certain incompleteness of the DR Archive, to a need for work to be done, and I tend to this need by commissioning the artists. The question is, however, as touched upon earlier, whether the artists' works can resolve this contentious matter, whether they can settle this archival disturbance. The answer to that question is, unsurprisingly, no. While Dahlberg's exhibition and Olsson's performance tour compensate the incompleteness of the DR Archive, they cannot but fail to measure up to this need. We cannot be done with the archive, with this (Derridian) thing that relentlessly reminds us of what no longer is. This does not mean that Dahlberg's exhibition and Olsson's performance tour have no bearing or influence on the DR Archive; while they may not satisfy the archive's need for care, they enrich and augment the DR Archive as external adjuncts.

I already touched upon the claimed self-sufficiency of the DR Archive in my analysis of the troubled beginning of the Tape Archive in Chapter 1; a beginning that is performatively instituted with a "founding document" dated April 15, 1952—although this document clearly states that the Tape Archive was founded "some years back." This desire for archival self-sufficiency is what Derrida calls the principle of consignation, a compulsion to gather together and coordinate the archive as an ideal configuration[319] without any dissociation to separate or otherwise compromise the archival synchrony. Against this defining feature of the archive that deems it a unity, my care, which I perform through the act of commissioning and actualise in the form of Dahlberg's exhibition and Olsson's performance tour, can only be added as an exterior augmentation to the DR Archive. With Derrida's curious supplement we are, in other words, able to rethink care beyond the dependency that it initially appeared to establish between artist and curator, and it can, as well, begin to account for workings of the commission as a response to a need.

An (In)capacitating Dependence

Now, the above may seem like an awful lot of trouble to go to just to be able to argue that I, through my curatorial practice, care for the artists and the DR Archive. The notion of care, of course, ties in with the argument that I am making—that my curatorial practice as well as the commission as such are needed and unnecessary at the same time—but there is also another reason why I bring up care, a more general and straightforward one that has to do with the

[319] Derrida, *Archive Fever*, 3.

basic co-operative nature of this project. To me, my work as a curator is fundamentally about collaborations—collaborations with artists, with art institutions or spaces, with other curators, and with the host of people, practices, and professions that also populate an art project—whatever shape or size these collaborations may take.

In collaborations—and especially co-operations[320]—we have to be able to depend on each other; in fact, I would argue that depending on each other is the linchpin of any co-operation. We depend on each other to realise what we set out to do, and we depend on each of us doing our utmost and investing ourselves wholeheartedly in this effort. The whole point of co-operation is in this sense to depend on someone else and benefit mutually from each other's practices. This dependence is not an incapacitating one but rather one that capacitates; with co-operations—especially between different practices or professions—we may even aspire "to know more, and better, and something else,"[321] as Foucault would have it, on account of the coming together of different practices and perspectives. I would argue that caring plays an important part in such co-operative aspirations, because in really exerting ourselves and pursuing a need or desire to know,[322] do we not exactly have to care? Foucault's re-association of care and curiosity truly reinvigorates both terms, and it certainly gives me a reason to want to reclaim caring as a primary curatorial mode of operation.

The notion of care is therefore central to the argument that I am making here. I argue that a commission can be likened to Latour's inquisitive assemblies of coming together and addressing a matter of concern. What I mentioned in Chapter 1 about the thing that prompts the gathering—that it might be more of a Derridian thing than a Latourian thing—does not make this inquiry any easier. Even so, my act of commissioning both instigates a process and establishes a configuration of DR Archive, curator, artists, and the ensuing artworks. On account of my commission we gather around the DR Archive and begin to inquire into it. The configuration even translates to paper in the form of a simple diagram of the commission, which also maps out the structure of this thesis. But while the diagram is a very useful device for understanding the relations of the commission, it cannot account for the precariousness of the construction. It cannot factor in the challenges and doubts that arise in practically every process, especially when dealing with such an uncertain thing as an archive. The configuration is, as I mentioned earlier, not a fail-safe mechanism; it is not enough to establish the relations, they have to be tended to by a certain measure of solicitude and care.

[320] Lind, "Complications; On Collaboration, Agency and Contemporary Art," 54.
[321] Foucault, "The Masked Philosopher", 305.
[322] Foucault speaks about "an immense curiosity, a need or desire to know." Ibid.

There are, in other words, several motivations for bringing up care once again; not only does it foster a desirable attitude when it comes to how we can know things, it is also invested in the gesture of gathering together and addressing a matter of concern. Care as a response to a need, however, complicates the relations established by the commission, because it begs the question of whether the artists and the DR Archive are really in need of my curatorial care. Is there not rather a widespread consensus that artistic practices and archives are sufficient in themselves? In order to factor in both of these positions, I model the workings of care on Derrida's concept of the supplement that insufficiently substitutes an incompleteness, a need, by being added as an external adjunct to something already complete. My care, in other words, has the peculiar status of a much-needed spare part that at the same time is excessive and hence dispensable. But in its dispensability, my care augments the artists' practices and the DR Archive; it attaches itself to them and enriches them through its supplementary mediation. In the case of the DR Archive, it is even the co-operative efforts of the artists and myself—my commission and curatorial operations as well as the artists' works—that produce a response to the DR Archive.

Promises, Promises

In the introduction, I described two lines of inquiry that underpin this thesis—briefly put, on the one hand, the line of questioning that Dahlberg and Olsson's work enable me to advance with regard to the DR Archive, and on the other hand, the meaning of my curatorial gesture of commissioning them to engage with this archive. Now, these two lines of inquiry are, as this thesis has shown, both entangled and interrelated: it is my act of commissioning that prompts the project in the first place; the artists' work that suggests possible understandings of the DR Archive; and our joint efforts that actualise and finalise Dahlberg's exhibition and Olsson's performance tour. This project indeed constitutes a multifaceted inquiry into the DR Archive, one that relies on several perspectives and practices that are expanded by this thesis to include additional, albeit only virtually present, interlocutors. We, the artists and I, as well as the theoretical perspectives that I bring to the mix constitute the "legitimate people"—whether corporally present or just virtually there—that Latour advises us must gather around matters of concern.[323]

I began the thesis by establishing that the DR Archive really can be considered a "matter of concern" in Latour's sense; it is not merely something that we—the artists and I—are compelled to engage with on account of our commissions, but something that we feel a need to concern ourselves with. The structure of the DR Archive—here in the form of blue pieces of papers inserted in-between the reel-to-reel tapes—is truly haunted, and we cannot pin down the beginnings of either the Tape Archive or the Voice Archive. In other words, the commission not only constitutes a Latourian *thing*, an analytical gesture, it addresses a Derridian *thing,* a ghostly presence or inheritance, which—as Derrida notes—"is never a given, it is always a task"[324]—a task that we must assume by radically transforming this inheritance. Dahlberg and Olsson's engagement with the DR Archive, which I proceeded to analyse in Chapter 1, initiate this transformative undertaking by setting out to identify an archival matter that raises their concern—something that not only captures their attention by demanding intense scrutiny but also, as was the case with Dahlberg, lends itself to complication beyond the logics of the DR Archive itself. Dahlberg eventually focused her attention on a radio program on working conditions from 1970, around which she gathered a

[323] Latour, "From Realpolitik to Dingpolitik", 6.
[324] Derrida, *Specters of Marx*, 67.

group of "legitimate people," while Olsson, as a consequence of a dispute with the DR Sales Department, abandoned the possibility of using any material from the DR Archive altogether. This decision, which allowed him to develop his performance without further distractions, testifies to his considerable concern about the current state of the DR Archive, and how a public service institution makes the past available to us.

After these introductory manoeuvres, Chapters 2 and 3 engaged with the artists' subsequent realisations of the commissions as presented in Dahlberg's exhibition, *This Time It's Political*, which included her new video work "Fifty Minutes in Half an Hour," produced as a result of her engagement with the DR Archive, and Olsson's performance, *DR P3. 1963-2013. 50 Years of Danish State Authorised Pop Radio*, which he showed at a number of art and cultural institutions. While these manifestations, the exhibition and the performance tour, are quite different from each other—something to which my reading also testifies—the chapters do have one thing in common: In neither of them am I able to produce a unequivocal, conclusive reading. Both chapters can be said to alternate between two tensions—in the case of Dahlberg's exhibition, modes of inoperability and operability, and in the case of Olsson's performance tour, two distinct and mutually incompatible temporalities.

In Dahlberg's exhibition, the video "Fifty Minutes in Half an Hour" foregrounds inoperability by iterating, in a distracted manner, motions and things that have become impossible to use. Both human motions (due to the MTM system) and the radio program "Workplace 70" (due to its archival state) have been separated into a sphere of consumption rendering them unprofanable in Agamben's sense. Dahlberg's video, however, emancipates both the motions and the radio program from, respectively, their enforced purposefulness and archival seclusion, and momentarily returns them to the free use of man. Turning to the remainder of the exhibition, the work "A Room of One's Own / A Thousand Libraries,"—a compilation of underlinings and notes made by readers of library copies of the Swedish translation of Woolf's essay, *A Room of One's Own*—in particular, emphasises operability by accumulating collective agency through its archival gesture. It is by being archived again in Dahlberg's work that the traces of past readers of Woolf's essay can truly articulate and actualise a shared aspiration, and in doing so delineate a space for a thinking in common to emerge. So, by way of iteration, the exhibition, I argue, accentuates understandings of archiving as both an instrumentalising procedure that locks things and gestures into a means-ends logic rendering free use impossible, and as an empowering undertaking that, through accumulation, can actualise collective aspiration. The endeavours to undo the former and assume the latter are what I have called modes of inoperability and operability, and they are

simultaneously and politically at work in Dahlberg's exhibition.

My reading of Olsson's performance in Chapter 3 also comes up short with regard to establishing a definitive and undivided understanding of the performance and its actualisation of the DR Archive—here in the guise of two temporalities, that of the flash and that of the spectre. While traits of Benjamin's storyteller as well as his collector are prevalent in Olsson's performance, it is Olsson's likeness to Benjamin's historian that produces the temporality of the flash, and—as Benjamin specifies—this happens precisely at a moment of danger. The dialectical tension is undeniable when Olsson, confronted with the copyright restrictions of DR, grabs hold of a memory, here in the form of a vinyl record of East German comedians, and a constellation of DR's copyright restrictions and a totalitarian regime flashes into view. The temporality of the spectre is less conspicuous. It relies on Olsson's opening anecdote about a ventriloquist, specifically the host of disembodied voices that derive from this exergue-like jest. With this anecdote, Olsson invokes an electrified history of spectral agency, one that upsets the entire performance both temporally and epistemically, much like Derrida's politics of memory. So, here also, the chapter ultimately remains inconclusive by developing two temporalities that both hinge on notions of messianism—notions that are incompatible, although simultaneously at work in Olsson's performance.

Now, as I touched upon in the Introduction, I am under no illusion that my readings of Dahlberg's exhibition and Olsson's performance tour can exhaust their possible meanings. In fact, if we extend the notion of curatorial care modelled on Derrida's supplement to also include my readings of the artists' works,[325] the indeterminacy of these chapters are intrinsic to the task at hand. Of course, this branching out of curatorial care would require a need, but, as Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak notes in her preface to Derrida's *Of Grammatology,* "there would be no justification for our activity [of interpretation] if we did not feel that the text *needed* interpretation."[326] Spivak talks about a text, but could this need for interpretation not also apply to artworks, exhibitions and performance tours? If my interpretation of these manifestations indeed adheres to curatorial care, it is, however, a care that will not and cannot satisfy their need for interpretation. Rather, my reading of the artworks leaves behind a new

[325] The processes that my act of commissioning brought into being, of course, come to an end with the realisation of Dahlberg's exhibition and Olsson's performance tour, and with them, in a certain sense, my curatorial process and care do so too. On the other hand, interpretation, I would argue, is also a crucial aspect of my work as a curator—whether this consists of the analytical and interpretative efforts invested in realising an exhibition, for example, or the work that goes into producing a text for an exhibition catalogue, or in this case, a PhD thesis. Furthermore, Chapters 2 and 3 are necessarily informed if not conditioned by my position as a curator in the project. For this reason, I would argue that my interpretative efforts also constitute curatorial care.
[326] Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "Translator's Preface," in *Of Grammatology*, by Jacques Derrida, Corrected edition (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998) lxxiv.

need for further and future interpretation.

Turning to Chapter 4, my supplementary care—that is, my interpretation—of Dahlberg's exhibition and Olsson's performance tour would appear to be part of a sequence of supplements, because as I argue in this chapter, both my commissioning of Dahlberg and Olsson to engage with the DR Archive, as well as my efforts to sustain their engagement with this matter of concern constitute curatorial care as modelled on Derrida's notion of the supplement. In other words, this sequence of supplements would include my caring for the DR Archive (through the commission and the agency of the artists' works); for the artists (through my curatorial practice and by providing the artists with frameworks in which to show their works); and finally for Dahlberg's exhibition and Olsson's performance tour (through my interpretation of them in this thesis). While my curatorial practice is the fulcrum of this development of curatorial care, it also extends beyond the finality of realising the commissions and interpreting these manifestations as outlined in Chapters 2 and 3. It opens up and is opened up by a structure of theoretical thinking that does not subscribe to such determinacy or finality.[327] Thus, the 'curatorial' in curatorial care would seem not only to operate as an adjective pertaining to my practice as a curator, but also harbour the notion of *the curatorial*. Curatorial care is, in other words, not merely a temporary activity that pursues a particular goal, but an indefinite commitment that does not cease to operate with the finalisation of an exhibition, for example.

So, apart from the two lines of inquiry that this thesis pursues, there are two additional modes of operation at work. The title of the thesis already points to them: there are things that we *can* work out, and there are things that we *cannot* work out. The incentive to try to work something out in the first place, whether successful or not, of course hinges on a situation that is not readily solvable but requires a certain effort—being able to work something out is, in other words, not necessarily straightforward or unchallenging, and not being able to work something out does not mean that we should not make an effort—on the contrary. As suggested in the Introduction, these two modes are already reflected in the distinction between curating and *the curatorial*, but I would argue that they go beyond that, delineating the entire project.

There are things and processes that we can work out—and indeed have worked out. The

[327] As Nicolas Royle has noted, the three dots at the beginning of "…That Dangerous Supplement…" in Derrida's *Of Grammatology* were added in the English translation by Spivak to emphasise "what the less flamboyant French version already suggests," namely that there is always something before and something after the supplement. Nicholas Royle, *Jacques Derrida*, Adobe eReader Format (London: Routledge, 2003), 48.

artists and I have responded to our respective commissions as well as our concerns and curiosities to engage with the DR Archive, and we have in turn produced artworks, an exhibition, a performance tour, and this thesis. We have exerted our practices—artistic and curatorial—to come up with responses to the DR Archive, and endeavoured to keep the promises that we made to ourselves and each other, as well as those we made to other parties, such as art institutions and funding bodies. It has, for sure, been a long and strenuous process; there have been moments of uncertainty and intense pondering, but we have thought and talked things through, figured out ways to move ahead, made decisions, and worked things out.[328] Throughout these efforts, there has always been a finishing line in the form of an exhibition, a performance tour and a thesis, and hence an undercurrent, an impulse, of effectivity.

I do not mean for this to sound like an irksome duty, because it is not; but this is how we—and this is a rather general we—work, and how we get stuff done.[329] By delivering a promise of an exhibition, curating is just one of many activities determined by finality—the commission emphasises this push, but artists, too, finalise processes all the time in order to realise artworks. In order to call something an exhibition, a performance tour, an artwork, or a thesis, the processes that bring about these things have to be completed or at least be brought to an end. Even for something to come back and haunt us, it has to be in the past and, in this sense, over. The (re-)appearance of the ghost of Hamlet's father that I described at the beginning of this thesis, for example, can only happen because he has passed away. The return of this troubling apparition, on the other hand, begins to unravel the self-sufficiency of the present and the finality that I described above, which brings me to what we cannot work out.

Now, the things that we cannot work out and be done with pertain in part to the indeterminacy that the ghost heralds, and to the task of engaging with and radically transforming an inheritance, in this case the DR Archive. The need that my commission of

[328] Even in the case of Olsson's disagreement with the DR Sales Department—a situation that clearly did not work out—Olsson devised another plan that enabled him to realise the commission: He simply circumvented the institutional archive and instead used historical documents and objects from outside the institutional archive.
[329] This 'we' could in principle pertain to practically any line of work, but in order to narrow down the field a little let me follow the lead of Jan Verwoert, who addresses a certain 'we' that no longer only works but *performs*. He writes, "When we choose to make our living on the basis of doing what we want, we are required to get our act together and get things done, in any place, at any time." And this 'we' is "the creative types—who invent jobs for ourselves by exploring and exploiting our talents to perform small artistic and intellectual miracles on a daily basis. Jan Verwoert, "Exhaustion and Exuberance. Ways to Defy the Pressure to Perform," in *Tell Me What You Want, What You Really, Really Want*, by Jan Verwoert, ed. Vanessa Ohlraun (Rotterdam; Berlin; New York: Piet Zwart Institute, Willem de Kooning Academy, Rotterdam University; Sternberg Press, 2010) 13–14.

Dahlberg and Olsson reference is always already there, and while Dahlberg's exhibition and Olsson's performance tour transform this need, they cannot satisfy it. The processes established by my act of commissioning may be brought to an end, as I described above, but what these realisations accomplish with regard to the DR Archive is simultaneously too little and too much. A similar structural awkwardness is at work in the relations between Dahlberg's exhibition and Olsson's performance tour, on the one hand, and, on the other, my readings of them. Not that Chapters 2 and 3 do not accomplish anything: they enrich and augment our understanding of these works, but the undecidability that my readings produce also indicates that my efforts will not suffice; they can only re-inscribe the need in a different way. My curatorial care with regard to the artists' practices and processes operates according to a corresponding and equally confounding inadequacy by being both needed and unnecessary, excessive and insufficient at the same time, and it leaves behind a need for additional care. In other words, the relations above are not resolvable; we cannot work them out, be done with them and move on. There is something truly bewildering about the way these things operate; the ghost, Derrida argues, "no longer belongs to knowledge,"[330] and the supplement structure is "almost inconceivable to reason."[331] The DR Archive and my curatorial care are not one and the same thing, but they operate in accordance with a similarly inscrutable logic of belonging without belonging.

The presumption that the commissioned artwork can satisfy the need that the commission adheres to is, in other words, not correct—at least not in the case of the DR Archive[332]—but that is perhaps not entirely surprising. What is more interesting is what the commission, as a mode of inquiry, makes possible; what it accomplishes through its mode of operation—what it calls into question, and how. I would argue that the commission, as a mode of inquiry, actualises a particular understanding of the archive—not as a place that can provide answers to our questions if we look hard enough—but as a more uncertain or indeed questionable *thing.* A thing that we *must* question and continue to question, not just with regard to things past, but also and crucially with regard to how the archive makes the past available to us. Furthermore, rather than emphasising the delegation of a task to someone else—that is, passing the buck, so to speak—the realisation of the commissions testifies to the

[330] Derrida, *Specters of Marx,* 5.
[331] Derrida, *Of Grammatology,* 154.
[332] The question is, of course, whether any commissioned artwork ever can satisfy the need to which it responds. In the case of a public space, for example, the artwork of course enriches and augments the space in question, but rather than closing the conversation, the artwork will also induce a need for further interpretations and discussions of both the artwork itself and what it accomplishes relative to the need it responds to.

achievements of the joint efforts of the artists and myself. As I conclude in Chapter 4, it is precisely our co-operative efforts—my commission and curatorial operations as well as the artists' work—that produce a response to the DR Archive. It is, in other words, by working together that we can begin to come to terms with this inherently contested thing. Not in order to lay the question of the archive to rest, but to engage with it and transform it in ways that go beyond what scholarly practices can accomplish.

Finally, the commission also enables me to reinvigorate the notion of curatorial care—to open up our understanding of the curator and substantiate the *cura* in curator. The kind of curator that emerges from these pages is not so much an *exhibition maker*, which constitutes a prevalent contemporary understanding of what it is to be a curator,[333] and one that emphasises the prominence of the exhibition and thus the effectiveness of 'working things out.' Rather, the curatorial position that I have developed here evokes, and radically transforms, the notion of the *curator-as-carer* as described by O'Neill.[334] Rather than maintaining status quo, the curator-as-carer re-appears as someone who endeavours "to know more, and better, and something else,"[335] and pursues this aspiration by establishing inquisitive gatherings. By developing the commission as a mode of inquiry, I am proposing a way to conduct research *through* curating—a mode of research that utilises and scrutinises the potentialities harboured in the curatorial operations, that pivots on the joint efforts of the artists and myself, and that works the intensities of our archival approaches without endeavouring to work them out.

[333] As I touched upon in the Introduction, curator Charles Esche prefers the term exhibition maker to curator. (Esche, "Beti Zerovc Interviews Charles Esche," 57.) Furthermore, curator Jens Hoffmann, for example, describes his practice as "fundamentally tied to making exhibitions," and states that his role "is to display artworks in space in a meaningful way according to a particular concept." Jens Hoffmann, "Ten Fundamental Answers," in *Ten Fundamental Questions of Curating*, ed. Jens Hoffmann (Milan: Mousse Publishing, 2013), 15.
[334] O'Neill, *The Culture of Curating and the Curating of Culture(s),* 9.
[335] Foucault, "The Masked Philosopher", 305.

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3.5-6: Olof Olsson: stills from documentation video of *DR P3. 1963-2013. 50 Years of Danish State Authorised Pop Radio,* 2013. Kunsthal Nord, Aalborg. Courtesy of the artist.

3.7: Olof Olsson: still from documentation video of *DR P3. 1963-2013. 50 Years of Danish State Authorised Pop Radio,* 2013. Kunsthal Nord, Aalborg. Courtesy of the artist.

4.1: Diagram of the commission. Diagram: Louise Haugaard Nielsen.

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Abstract

This thesis is concerned with the Danish Radio Archive, not just as a place of research, but also as a genuine matter of concern, as something that does not reveal itself to us, and that we cannot figure out. The driving force behind the project is my curatorial practice, and I approach the DR Archive by commissioning two artists, Kajsa Dahlberg and Olof Olsson, to engage with this archive and produce artworks in relation to it. Commissioning is, in other words, my way of establishing a mode of inquiry into this inherently difficult and contested thing. To this end, my commissions not only pertain to the production of artworks, but also to settling matters with the DR Archive—a task that is exceedingly more troublesome to be done with, according to Derrida.

In this thesis, I argue that a commission is conditioned by a *need*; whatever purpose, context, or place to which the commission adheres, there is a need for work to be done, and a presumption that the artwork can satisfy this need, because commissioning is precisely an act of extending a task to someone else, and in doing so I also acknowledge and designate a need for a certain kind of work to be done. I begin the thesis by substantiating my inkling that this archive does indeed give us reason to be concerned, and I go on to analyse the artists' initial engagements with the DR Archive. On account of the commissions, Dahlberg produced a video, "Fifty Minutes in Half an Hour," which was part of her solo exhibition, *This Time It's Political,* and Olsson produced a performance, *DR P3. 1963-2013. 50 Years of Danish State Authorised Pop Radio*. These two artworks are the focal points of Chapters 2 and 3, in which I analyse, expand upon, and speculate on the archival questioning that the artworks produce.

In Chapter 4, I return to my curatorial operations in order to flesh out the acts of selecting and commissioning. I explore the commission as a research design, and I argue that my endeavours as a curator must be assiduous in order to maintain the workability of this precarious construction. I go on to propose that by modelling the notion of a curator's care on Derrida's *supplement*, I can factor in both the economy of dependence upon which care relies, as well as the self-sufficiency of artistic practice. This understanding of curatorial care can also begin to account for the commission as a response to a need. In short, this project pursues two lines of questioning: one that, following the act of commissioning, scrutinises the artworks as responses to an archival need, and another that acknowledges the impossibility of working things out with an archive.

Resumé

Denne afhandling beskæftiger sig med DRs radioarkiv. Ikke blot som et sted, hvor man bedriver forskning, men også som en *bekymringsgenstand* (jf. Latours "matter of concern"); som noget der ikke giver sig fuldt ud til kende for os. Projektet tager afsæt i min kuratoriske praksis, og jeg har kommissioneret to kunstnere, Kajsa Dahlberg og Olof Olsson, til at beskæftige sig med arkivet og producere værker i relation til det. Ved at kommissionere kunstnerne etablerer jeg samtidig en undersøgelsesmodus for arbejdet med DRs radioarkiv. Det er med andre ord ikke alene med henblik på værkproduktion, at jeg har kommissioneret kunstnerne, men også for at debattere spørgsmålet om arkivet – en opgave, der ifølge Derrida er langt vanskeligere at få greb om endsige blive færdig med.

I afhandlingen argumenterer jeg for, at det at kommissionere et kunstværk er foranlediget af et behov og baseret på en forestilling om, at kunstværket kan tilfredsstille dette behov. At kommissionere drejer sig om at udlicitere den opgave, det er at respondere på dette behov, og behovet knytter sig til den lokalitet eller sammenhæng, som kommissionen refererer til – i dette tilfælde DRs radioarkiv. Jeg indleder afhandlingen med at underbygge min formodning om, at DRs radioarkiv giver anledning til bekymring i Latoursk forstand, og i forlængelse heraf analyserer jeg kunstnernes indledende arbejde med arkivet. På baggrund af kommissionerne producerede Dahlberg videoværket "Fifty Minutes in Half an Hour," som var en del af hendes soloudstilling *This Time It's Political,* og Olsson producerede performancen *DR P3. 1963-2013. 50 Years of Danish State Authorised Pop Radio.* I kapitel 2 og 3 analyserer jeg disse værker med særligt henblik på de arkivforståelser, som værkerne artikulerer.

I kapitel 4 retter jeg igen opmærksomheden mod min kuratoriske praksis – i særlig grad udvælgelsen og kommissionering. På baggrund af praksiskonstellationen af arkiv, kurator, kunstnere og værker udvikler jeg kommissionen som en undersøgelsesmodus og en forskningsmodel, og jeg argumenterer for, at kuratorens rolle er at understøtte konstellationens bæredygtighed med omhu og omsorg. I forlængelse heraf foreslår jeg at benytte Derridas særegne forestilling om *supplementet* som en model for kuratorisk omsorg (eng. curatorial care). Derridas supplement gør det muligt at forholde sig til den afhængighedsøkonomi, der er forbundet med omsorg, samtidig med at opfattelsen af den kunstneriske praksis stadig kan anses for at være selvberoende. Denne forståelse af kuratorisk

omsorg kan også belyse, hvordan kommissionen opererer i forhold til et behov. Mine undersøgelser følger således to tangenter: Én der i forlængelse af kommissionen analyserer, hvordan kunstnernes arbejde indkredser og responderer på et arkivalsk behov; og en anden der anerkender umuligheden i at opfylde dette behov og komme overens med arkivet.